

GOD'S SMILE

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INTRODUCTION

Before I begin the account of some very remarkable personal experiences it is necessary for me to introduce myself to my readers, for I cannot assume that everybody knows who I am. This is all the more necessary because I believe that, in addition to my old readers, this book will gain for me some readers who have not before heard of, or know only superficially, this dramatist, who appears to be a favorite with the frequenters of the Royal Theater.

I am, as has already been stated, a dramatist and until a few years ago I was also a bold and somewhat feared journalist on the radical press. My name is pretty well known in my own country, but beyond its borders I have only scattered admirers. The plays of my youth, however, have wandered far afield in German and Dutch speaking countries. I believe that they are about to penetrate America, but of this I have no certain information.

After a silence of five years I now seize my

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pen and publish a book that will be a surprise to my friends and to the public, who have heard that I had written a new play. This was true, but unforeseen circumstances induced me to interrupt the work when it was almost completed, and this book deals with these circumstances. I had planned to have my comedy performed this season and I was in the midst of arduous efforts to complete it, when something happened that completely altered my plans and that will alter my whole life.

Those who are acquainted with the author of these pages will consider it superfluous for me to explain that I may regard the giving up of my dramatic composition as an event. But to those who do not know me it must be told why it is an event for me and for a small circle in Copenhagen in the season of 1919-1920.

I may venture to claim without self-praise, to which, by the way, I am not at all averse, that hitherto I have been highly successful in my career as a dramatist, remarkably successful, indeed. The Danish National Theater has presented many of my plays and from my earliest youth success has accompanied me. I can therefore assume that when I was ap-

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proaching a new première at the Royal Theater it was with the absolute certainty that such an event would be anticipated with suspense in the circle to which I belong. My vanity was tickled in the highest degree to realize that people anticipated with great curiosity, devices with which the popular young dramatist intended to entertain the public. I knew that the curiosity and suspense would be all the greater because since 1915 I had not produced a new play or written anything of interest. But, on the other hand, I had written nothing that could disappoint my friends.

After a long period of lassitude I had my work prepared and had reached the last stage.

I give this detailed description, not at all in order to please myself by telling about the author whom I so highly prize, but in order to explain that I had reached a critical point in my career. My youth had glided away with uninterrupted success. I was thirty-seven years old. I felt that when I now appeared before the public I must show myself as a maturer man. After long and energetic efforts I had gone far enough to realize that there were possibilities of recovering the place I had occupied as a young man, a place which

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I had forsaken, not because I had been thrust aside by other and better writers, but which I had left because of illness and many other circumstances which had robbed me of my courage and the will to work.

But in November, 1919, I could discern the goal and I was again filled with eagerness to appear before the public and to show that I was the same as I was before, only better, older and more mature.

This is the truth about myself, which I must write in order that you may understand that I had reached a very important and decisive point in my life. With a glad heart and trembling mind I felt that I was my old self again, that my characters lived and their speeches buzzed about their ears. And then I threw aside the whole play and lost all interest in it.

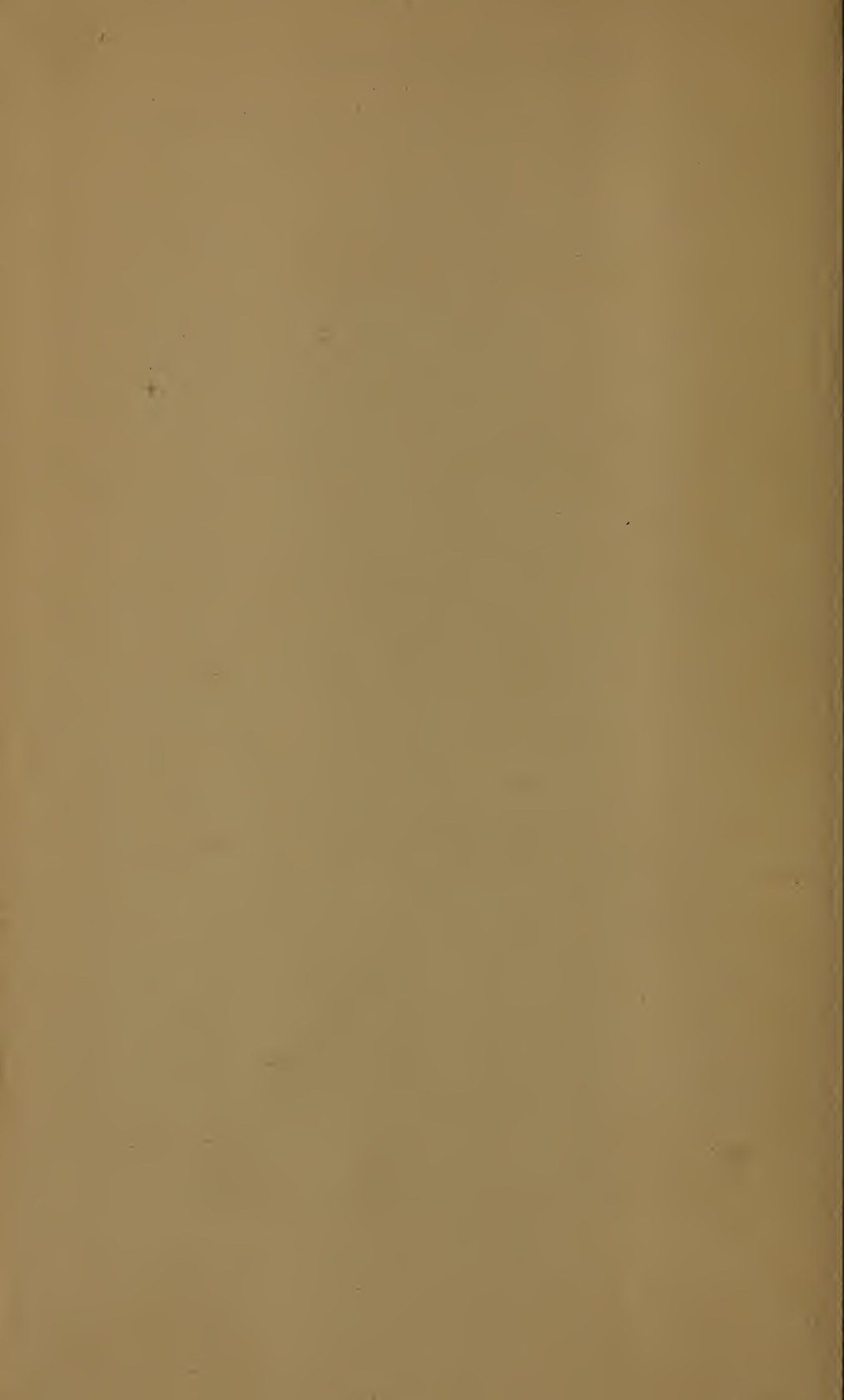
You must acknowledge that those must have been important circumstances that could induce a writer in my position to give up his whole enterprise and lay aside a piece of work that signified for him a new epoch in his life. My friends will be all the more amazed at these words, for they know that this work is my one real interest and that the only thing

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that can really urge me to effort is my ambition.

The following pages describe the circumstances that induced me to take this step. These circumstances were so unusual, so remarkable, that I believe it will be very difficult for me to convince my readers that I am telling the truth, all the more difficult because I myself can hardly believe what I know. Although I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears, although I have felt with my senses and although my heart and my intellect have been convinced, I, who write this, am perhaps the greatest skeptic of all.

It may seem strange that in the very introduction I should cast doubts upon the truth of my account. But if you follow me to the end you will understand me. I do not doubt the correctness of my account, for I know that nothing that I have written is exaggerated or untrue. But my doubt is concerned with the puzzling, wonderful, incomprehensible details that are found in these pages, which I communicate because I cannot help myself, because I must and shall.



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I

I MUST weary my readers with a few more words about the person whose name appears on the title page of this book. I am, as I have already stated, thirty-seven years old and Danish, born in Denmark, Danish heart and soul. Denmark contains all that I love and admire. I have passed my whole life in my own country and when I have been abroad I have felt like a lonesome fugitive. I write this because it is necessary to give a full characterization of the man whose story follows in these pages. I am no adventurer, who has wandered over the world. I have very little knowledge about any subject. My knowledge has been gained by intuition, seldom by experience. What I have learned has been by hearsay and presentiment.

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My life has been such that I have never engaged in studies of any sort. I have led the superficial life of a journalist. I have had friends in all classes, rich and poor, artists and business men. I have glided with the stream, have always kept afloat and have never had any experiences that could leave their mark on my life or deprive me of my equipoise—never until the day when I laid aside my unfinished play.

I desire the reader, before he begins my account, to know the author, and therefore I shall continue this report of myself. Because of the circumstances that compel this self-revelation, I shall keep strictly to the truth, even if it is not always flattering.

I am a rather ignorant person and terribly superficial. My knowledge of history and literature is so scattered that at times I have thought seriously of making an effort to obtain some substantial culture. But hitherto I have had neither the time nor the opportunity for these studies. I know a little about everything, since I come from a cultivated home,

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whose head was an artist and a scholar. I have always been able to get along even in the most difficult situations, because I have had some idea about all problems and because I have learned to guess at what I did not know. But I lack positive and substantial knowledge on any subject, for the life that I have led such knowledge was unnecessary and the branch of literature that I have cultivated did not demand knowledge.

But I knew life—slightly. I have experienced a good deal of life and what I have not seen I have felt. My own experiences have not been great and I have encountered no dramas on my path. But I knew myself and I knew my heart. I could experience all emotions and imagine all possible dramas. My imagination was not creative, but my feelings were alive and my instinct was seldom at fault.

It has been said of me that I had a good heart. I have never believed this. My heart was my talent. My heart could throb with emotion, but it was my talent not my love for human beings. My temperament rested, not

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on warm, human feelings, but on my talent.

It will appear from these self-revelations that I must be a rather superficial person. I have been of that opinion myself, but I have concealed it from myself and from others. But I must say that I am not convinced that this is true. For I enjoy none of the pleasures that are experienced by superficial persons. I have lived rocking on the surface, often sunning myself in the happiness that surrounds an amiable person who combines with amiability some talent and a little success. But I have never found happiness in superficial pleasures. Nothing that my life has brought me has given me satisfaction, and when I have been most successful and apparently most favored by fate an inner voice has whispered to me: "That may be altogether vanity."

I knew life and could feel life, for my talent had a consciousness of it. I could tremble with joy and believe that now I was a man, that now life met me, now I was mature—but an inner devil gave me no rest. And never, while I rocked happily and proudly on the

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surface, could I close my ears to this devilish voice.

When I speak of my talent I am not thinking of the word as used in a literary sense. I am fully aware of my ability and its limitations and I have never overvalued what there *was* of it. If I have ever ridden a high horse it is because I have thought of what I might be. For I have never doubted that some time I should reach that after which my whole soul panted, the one object of my deep love and feeling, my only goal, my all.

What I mean by my talent is my extraordinary illusion about everything. I have no profound knowledge of life, but I have a strange illusion concerning it. I do not know the good and the profound and the precious in existence, but I have a presentiment about them. My heart cannot feel a man's deep love, but it can tremble at the thought of it. I have no knowledge of literature and I have read nothing, I am not acquainted with the history and systems of philosophy—I know nothing, for I have learned nothing—but I have an incom-

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prehensible illusion about all these matters. I can feel that a name is great and I can feel the difference between good and evil. I have guessed my way to life and history and existence, and that is what I call my talent.

I have existed in this talent. I have not led an interesting life and I have not known great men or written great works. Rightly considered, my life has been without importance and my friends have been indifferent and my literary efforts superficial and trivial, but my talent has given content to my life, my heart has trembled before a thousand illusions, and deep down in my strange soul, unintelligible to myself, I have had the feeling that life had a meaning. And now this meaning begins to appear to me as something that I have always known and always waited for, while I rocked on the surface, full of life and humor, although everything about me was black.

As I am about to publish this book my heart is filled with anxiety. For no one who has known me will be able to comprehend me and no one who has ever heard of me will be able

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to grasp it. Of all writers I am convinced that I should be the last from whom such a book would be expected. It will be so incomprehensible to my friends and acquaintances and to those who know me by reputation that I must prepare myself not only to be the object of the heartiest ridicule, but to be suspected by many to have lost my mind.

In these lines I have sought to characterize myself so that readers who do not know me may learn what sort of a man it is that relates the extraordinary things that will appear on the following pages. Every one, I believe, will perceive that the author, in addition to many doubtful qualities, has the quality of vanity, and I shall not deny it. When you know this you will realize what an effort is demanded for me to publish this book. I can already feel with an anxious heart and blushing cheeks the storm of laughter that will arise from that city in which I have passed my whole life and from those persons whom I have known and to whose laughter and tears I have appealed in my writings. I feel that I am burning my

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bridges behind me. I feel myself as an easy and grateful mark for the very kind of ridicule and laughter in which I have indulged through a long life. I feel that the scoffer's house is afire.

But I burn the bridge although my vain heart is filled with anguish and I must see how I can endure all the laughter to which I shall be subjected. I shall not feel like a martyr, for I understand that laughter far better than any one else, and I can join in the laughter and can comprehend all the feelings with which this book will be received and I understand best of all those readers who will declare that I am mad. For at times I am myself convinced that I am mad, although I know that I am not. I can also at times laugh at and ridicule myself, although I know that there is no cause for ridicule—only for a smile, a happy smile.

Others will declare that I am a fraud and that this is a new invention by a clever author. But the feelings of these doubters I cannot understand, for every one should realize

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that what I write is either truth or madness.

And now I send out my book with an anxious heart and give it to the publishers with trembling hands. For this is the most extraordinary thing I have ever heard. And I have described it. This is the most incomprehensible thing I have ever thought of, and it is a book written by me. And it is the most marvelous, the most beautiful, the most radiant thing I have ever dreamt of, and it is truth and fact and I relate it. It is at the same time the most incredible, the most elevated and the most comic thing that I have ever held up to ridicule—and I have described it with a beating heart.

This day, as I write these lines, is the most remarkable day in my life and the greatest. My whole body trembles. The blood throbs in my temples. My heart is in my throat and my eyes are filled with tears. My mouth smiles and my hands shake. I hear a resounding laughter within me and note suffocating sobs in my throat; I feel that I am a fool

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and I experience a joy such as I have never experienced before.

I present this book to my readers with an apologetic smile. But the smile I feel in my throat is not the smile that my readers see on my lips, and after you have read my book I hope that the smile that smiles in my mind will tremble in your hearts.

II

IT was one of the first days in November. I sat at my desk and had arranged my paper, pen, ink and pipe. Everything was ready and before long a new play would lie completed on the desk.

I had spent the whole summer and most of the autumn in the country, to which I had retired after five years' rest, illness and melancholy, to recuperate and to prepare the play that was now almost finished. I had just returned from the heather-covered hills of Jutland where I had breathed more air and light than ever before in my life. I felt that I had perfect health and I sat in my study full of courage and energy.

I reviewed my characters and considered their speeches. The play was pretty good. It might amount to something. With a deep sigh over the terrible idleness of the past and a

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smile to the future, I realized that I was myself again. The play had life and, with a little additional exertion, I could finish it and send it to the theater.

As I sat there that November day I was in the best possible humor. For many years I had struggled with my stubborn pen. I had written and lamented the fate that had overtaken the poets of Europe, with special reference to a young dramatist, who lacked courage and energy. I had in every way sought to fight my way out of the inactivity of these years and I had cursed the war, which had robbed us all of humor and courage. And naturally people had smiled indulgently at the foolish poet who could not write in *this great time*, which should have furnished inspiration to all true poets.

It is of no consequence to mention the cause of my inactivity. I can only say that a dense gray veil had covered my humor, a dull feeling of a distant grief and a concealed but gnawing doubt about the future had weakened me. Even if I had applied all my energy my

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hand would have fallen inert on my desk.

It can be understood easily, therefore, that on that November day I must have been filled with joy as I sat there gazing on my manuscript. I felt that I was myself again and that what I had written resembled my old self. I was not mad. I could face the new age. Yes, the *new* age.

I seized my pen and brushed my hair back from my forehead. The new age. Yes, I felt that we were in the presence of a new age, in which there was work to be done. I wrote a few powerful speeches, but after that I remained seated with my pen in my hand. I glanced out of the window and looked at the façade of the opposite house and the dead windows. And I uttered a sigh, without realizing how I could sigh in the midst of this exhilaration.

I heard a whisper within me, "The new age." Is not that something you have read in the papers? Was it not one of the statesmen of peace and war who had uttered a phrase about a new age, with work and obligations?

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Yes, that was not my own thought about the new age.

And I looked toward the clear autumn air above the houses and said to myself: "A new age must come, a new dawn must smile on the horizon. But whence shall it come? Not from the speeches of statesmen, nor from the phrases in the newspapers about duty, work, and sympathy and friendship. But the new age must come, for the world is in need of it." And I again looked at my manuscript, this time with a very despondent gaze.

"Empty! Empty! Empty!" I said to myself. "Bare and barren, shadows from the past, without color and without smiles. Dead and gray, like everything else in the world, like the world, like yourself!"

The new age! The new age had not come. Peace had not brought to the world the rosy-fingered dawn, of which we had all dreamed during the great war. We were all expectant now, but everything that appeared on the horizon was gray, every day was gray, gray, gray anew, full of more and more misery and

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wretchedness. The new age was a lie, and it seemed more distant than during the war.

I sat there at my desk. The autumn air, my instinct of self-preservation, my comparative youth and my energy had created for me an illusion about a new age, and I believed that I had awakened to action. But a glance at reality was sufficient to cast me down, and the devil that whispers to me when I feel bold and happy was now scoffing at me.

"A new age! Are you new? Look at what you have written! Is that new? Shadows! Shadows! It is trivial! Wholly trivial! Where is your smile? Where is the warmth? Where is the color? Your smile is a mere grimace, your heart is cold, the color is gray." I buried my head in my hands, for it was true.

We, who write, we could all take up our pens, and equip ourselves with all our strength and all our energy and in a body advance upon the great white paper that we have spread over the world. The whole army of the world's authors could stand shoulder to shoulder—and I knew that we could not discover

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the redeeming word that would restore warmth to the heart of the world.

For this was the truth. The heart of the world had grown cold. I felt it in myself. I, who was only an insignificant man in a country that had lain like a peaceful meadow in the midst of the miserable wretchedness of the world, I had no faith. I could fill myself with all the most beautiful words in the dictionary, I could repeat all the songs of the poets, I could borrow all the golden ink of poetry and dip my pen in it—those words to which the world must listen no one could write. No one could sing the song that could shake hearts, play the melodies that could wind themselves about tortured souls so that they tremble with ecstasy. For there was no one whose heart was not filled with emptiness and despair, and there was no one who could be kindled with happiness and hope and faith in the future. For no sun shone on the horizon. Everything was gray, gray.

My own efforts seemed to me more and more wretched. Here I sat at my desk and

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forced the humor up from my inkstand. But deep down in my soul a voice said that I had no humor. And if I went to the ends of the earth I could not find a comrade who would embrace me and say: "My friend, I shall teach you how to smile." For there was no smile in the earth. And then I felt that it was wrong for me to write, for that which I could write was not good enough. For the poet's calling is holy, and it is the poet's calling and the artist's calling to reveal to men their own hearts and to touch these so that they too tremble in smiles and tears.

I was a wretched man and my writing was a wretched trade, and I pushed it aside on the desk and again stared hopelessly up into the autumn sky.

Shadows of the past appeared in my play. Shadows of the past spoke the merry words of the past, but they were only shadow words. And such was the whole world. Wherever one sought to rejoice and to recover after the great misery, the joy was only the shadow of joy and the smile only the shadow of the smile

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of the past. No new joy, no new smile smiled upon the face of the world. Everything was destroyed in the great wretchedness and those who still had self-preservation enough to smile and laugh realized in their hearts that it was only the shadow of former joys that brought them to laughter, softly and without happiness in their souls.

There was no warmth in the world and no color. Birds and flowers, the sea and the sky smiled with nature's imperishable smile, but men's eyes stared hopelessly into the hopeless future. And at every word that was spoken about friendship and goodness and the new age hearts grew harder and harder, for no one had any true hope, no one believed in the truth of the words, because no one had any illusion about goodness. Men had shown themselves to be worse than wild beasts, all eyes had wept themselves dry, oceans of tears had been shed, storms of wretchedness and lamentation raged over the countries, and no one listened to those who raised their voices and spoke of smiles and goodness. For all

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that was dead and buried in the grief and the monstrous lewdness of the war.

But I shall not give a further description of the wretchedness of the world. History will describe this period, the most horrible that men have ever experienced. A description is superfluous for the present generation, which has seen and experienced it, whose heart has felt it and can never forget it.

And thus my poor heart wept that day as I sat after having exhausted all my courage, that wonderful energy which can force men to continue their lives in the midst of wretchedness, that mystical power, which seems invincible and which is now sustaining so many men.

But I soon comforted myself a little, for I know from experience that a poet, great or small, has periods when doubt tears him and when his own work is a horror to him. I comforted myself and hoped that I should pass through this purgatory, as I had so often done before.

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But within me spoke the truth: "That is only a consolation and an illusion. Within rages despair, within you can find no hope. Within there is nothing in which you believe, nothing you desire, nothing for which you will strive. Within you know that there is nothing worth striving for, for all is vanity. And when you have lulled your inner voice and seized your pen, it is only the shadow of your pen, for your pen no longer lives and your heart is dead. You will write with the shadow of your heart's blood, for there is no blood in your heart. You will again let your pen dance gayly over the paper, but it is only in the shadow of your youthful joy that it will dance, for the faith and joy of your youth are no more. You yourself no longer exist. You are only a shadow and all that you do will lack life. For life no longer exists. It is all mere shadows, and poor humanity is a monstrous, gray, sorrowful shadow."

Thus spoke my inner voice and for the rest of that day I lost the remainder of my cour-

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age. I bundled up my package of manuscript and threw it into a closet. And then I went out into the city, where I greeted careworn faces and talked with friends about the new misfortunes that were impending.

III

I HAVE now reached the day on which I had the first of the experiences that I shall relate in these pages. It is necessary for me to premise the remark that I am not religious. I have never believed in a personal god, I have attended church only at funerals and I am entirely without any religious inclinations. It is the same with that part of my family with which I am acquainted. I have been brought up without discipline and the admonition of the Lord. I have no religious friends and have not concerned myself with any kind of theology since I prepared for confirmation, almost twenty-five years ago. Hitherto my connection with the other world has been exclusively verbal—I mean, that I have sought connection with that which is beyond only when I have said “the devil” and “good.” Otherwise I

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have lived wholly on this earth, where I have sought my pleasures, where I have sought and found consolation. I have never, even in the greatest distress, appealed to the help of heaven.

It is necessary for me to explain this before I pass on to my actual subject. I must explain that I belong to that large class of people for whom the divine is something poetical but not palpable. All religious systems have appeared to me quite strange and puzzling. All divine worship has seemed to me childish and foolish, although I have, of course, been able to perceive the poetical element in the worship.

I have described myself as a young man who has rocked lightly on the surface without any great experiences. But I must tell that three years ago my own precious body was in the most imminent peril, while I lay completely wasted and in a dying condition after an operation. In that condition and later I suffered as keenly as a person can suffer. There was no pain that I was free from, no

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terror that I did not feel, no horror that I did not experience. But I sought consolation in the smiles and sympathy of friends and in my own will to live. Not for a moment did my thoughts turn toward the supernatural, not for a second did it occur to me to seek consolation or healing from the beyond. I did not dream of it, it was never in my thoughts. From this it can be gathered what my position was toward the "hereafter" and the problems of religion.

But I must mention one other thing. A short time before I began to write this book I had heard of the trend toward the mystical that was passing over the world, but I had not paid it any special attention. In my childhood I had taken part a few times in table tipping and thought that it was fine sport, but it had passed out of my mind. With regard to this question I have shared the opinion of the most intelligent persons in Europe. There are certain unknown forces of nature in the world, but they are not at all supernatural. Science will surely some time

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discover new and remarkable forces just as interesting as wireless telegraphy. And I have been willing to admit that possibly these forces were in part found in human beings, by which tables could be made to dance and thoughts can be transferred from the one subconsciousness to the other. All this I have been willing to admit, but I have taken no personal interest in it, for it was quite beyond the range of my speculation. I am no investigator, but I am not a stubborn and stupid person and I am willing to listen to any theory.

All supernatural accounts have had a certain interest for me, because every theory about anything mystical or interesting in existence has pleased my optimistic mind. But I have never made any investigations myself and I have never had any experiences, and, until the day of which I am speaking here, I have made no experiments of any kind since my occasional boyish games.

I am, as may be perceived from all this talk about myself, which is necessary in connec-

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tion with this account, a very skeptical person, with universal interests. My mind is susceptible to all sorts of influences and nothing seems to me impossible. But when the mystical has forced its way into my consciousness, after reflecting over it, I dismiss it with a skeptical smile. For a moment I can believe in everything, but my doubt and my skepticism gain the upper hand and reject all unauthenticated conceptions. My talent can form theories about any form of mysticism, but my reason destroys each theory.

But, as has been said, I had heard about the craving for the supernatural, which for the time seemed to rule the world, and I had, of course, indulged in reflections upon it. I regarded it as quite reasonable and inevitable that tortured humanity should find something to comfort itself with, although it appeared to me incomprehensible that poor sorrowing widows and mothers could find consolation in clinging to the legs of tables.

I had an impression, derived partly from reading and partly from hearsay, that, after

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every great war or other world calamity a religious movement passed through the peoples. And this appeared to me natural for on every side could be seen nothing but misfortune, with no escape for the future; and, I held those people fortunate who could put faith in a god, or a table leg or anything, for they must be unspeakably happier than any others and must awaken to new life. For my own part, I did not seek that kind of escape and it would have been quite contrary to my nature to do so.

When I heard that it was spiritism and not the common world religions that had especially won supporters and whose numbers were increasing with almost sensational speed, I was not at all surprised. For what consolation had the other religions given to men? We saw God addressed by all nations. Every nation appropriated God to itself. Murders and slaughters, meanness and lewdness, hatred and loathsomeness flourished, in spite of millions of churches and priests and bibles of all sorts, cathedrals and mosques, chapels and

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images. All was darkness and all the gods of humanity, young and old, wooden and golden, God the Father and the Holy Virgin, the prophets and Allah and Jehovah—all seemed to have forsaken wretched, lamenting, weeping humanity.

And then the table legs rapped! Table legs rapped in Paris and Berlin, in London and in Copenhagen, and the mourners clung to them.

Inconceivable folly! Incomprehensible madness! Humanity had come to this. Was it strange that a wave of laughter followed in the wake of the table legs? Men were in need of consolation, but strange to say the churches stood almost empty, although men cried aloud to God and moaned in solitude. But in thousands of homes the unhappy, the weeping ones, mothers, widows and orphans, sat about table legs and talked with their dead—in table legs.

I had heard about all this and had of course shaken my wise head. I read in the newspapers about the horrible occultism, the dark-

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ness into which ignorant humanity had sunk after the night of the war. The human mind had sunk down to remote dark ages and this, in truth, was one of the worst consequences of the war.

But the new god was not cultivated in my family or in my social circle and, therefore, I did not concern myself with the matter. I shook my head compassionately when I heard about it and found it just as incomprehensible that these poor fools of mortals could believe in a table leg as that they could believe in an avenging God or the other incomprehensible theological dogmas.

And now that I have revealed my religious, theological and spiritistic point of view to my readers I will pass on to the description of my first remarkable day in November, 1919.

IV

WE have now reached the critical day. I sat as usual at my desk, with my pile of papers before me and was about to begin in earnest. The horror at my work of the preceding day had subsided a little, for during the course of the night I had argued firmly with my pessimistic reflections. I dipped my pen in the ink.

But the door bell rang and my lyrical friend came to pay me a visit. Like me he is a poet, but he writes in verse, and he loves me because he finds me a patient listener when he reads his poems aloud. I have always had a weakness for lyric poets with verses in their pockets and I have always listened to them, for they seem to me to be sweet children. So I had listened to my friend's poetry without understanding it at all. But what did he care? I sat in the room while he read and I said that it was beautiful.

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But for the past few years we had not seen much of each other, for my friend had begun to write poems in French and that was too much for me. I did not care to listen to his French poems and I said to him that I thought he was a fool.

I mention this foolishness because it has some connection with what follows. Otherwise it is not worth mentioning, although one is tempted to seize every opportunity to chastise those absurd Danes who are bent upon kissing *la France*. My lyrical friend specialized in poems in praise of the poilus and this appeared to me extremely absurd. In my opinion he is a miserable soldier who sings the praises of the soldiers of foreign nations, and he is a miserable patriot who can be roused to such enthusiasm for another country that he abuses his own fatherland. We have many patriots of that stripe in Denmark and they have always been repulsive to me. On the whole, our tendency to self-depreciation amounts to a national fault. If we wish to disapprove wholly of any one's actions, we

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say: "That is typically Danish." We ought to be ashamed of ourselves.

But I was talking about my lyrical friend with his French enthusiasm. He had paid homage to the French nation with poems on the *poilus* and French *gloire*, which, especially before the war, was a popular subject for discussion. Now only the most naïve poets write poems in praise of this *gloire*. Well, he stood in my room and we shook hands. I expressed the hope that he had learned his mother tongue, but he did not answer me directly, but sat down and stared into vacancy.

"I have had a remarkable experience," he said, "I have talked with a French soldier."

"Yes, there is no lack of such."

"To be sure, but he was dead. I have talked with a dead *poilu*."

I shook my head sympathetically. "Good heavens!" I said, "do the French *poilus* rise from the grave and thank you for your poems?"

But he looked quite seriously at me and

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said: "I have come to you because you are such a clear thinker. You have your queer notions, but you are free from superstition. I do not believe that any one could fool you and so you must tell me if you think I am crazy. I have talked with a dead French soldier."

"In that case you must be crazy. It does not take much intelligence to decide that."

"Do you believe in nothing?"

"No, you know I have no use for faith."

My friend sat for a while a little embarrassed. Then he explained himself to me.

"I have several times attended spiritistic séances, at which a poilu entered the table leg and expressed a desire to talk with me. You must not laugh, although it is quite natural that you should do so. But I am not lying. Tables can spell, they can speak. There are spirits around us. All that we have regarded as stupid superstition and humbug is true."

I believe that I smiled rather maliciously as I said: "Good lord, does your enthusiasm for

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la France go so far that the legs of your table speak French and delude you into the belief that they are French soldiers?"

But my friend said gently: "It is so easy to make fun of all this, for it is so inconceivably absurd. But you are not stupid, and thank heaven you are not a scientist, and if we should prove that it was true, now, here, immediately, what would you say?"

"I should probably believe that I was crazy too. To be frank, shall we not keep away from such nonsense?"

But my friend grew eager: "No, I insist that you see it, you, who ridicule everything. It will do you good to see proofs of something supernatural. There is a table."

I laughed: "My great grandfather's table! Do you think it can dance?"

"We can try."

I glanced at my manuscript, but was rather relieved at being interrupted in my work and I laughingly said to my friend: "Well, come and let us see my great grandfather's table dance. But it will surely be a minuet."

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He looked seriously at me. "I myself felt just as you do now. But you shall see, the day will come when you will feel quite differently."

"I do not believe, my dear friend, that you will ever be able to convince me that the dead behave so foolishly. I have no objection to admitting tentatively that you have so many hysterical qualities, that you are so filled with electricity or magnetism, that a table may tremble from the mere contact with you. But frankly, my friend, it is too hopeless to believe that a dead French soldier should appear here in my table as a spirit."

My lyrical friend silently drew my great grandfather's table into the middle of the room and induced me to sit opposite him. We sat there like two fools, with our hands on the table. I waited in suspense, for I knew that there must be some truth about the remarkable force that can move a table, and, as I was very anxious to witness it, I preserved my patience for half an hour, after which I

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said: "Well, old fellow. your Frenchman is not coming."

"Wait," he said.

After he had said this the table began to tilt and of course I immediately accused him of having moved it.

"I did not move it," he said; "it is the spirits."

Although the affair interested me I felt ashamed and consoled myself by making as much fun of my friend as possible. But it made no impression on him and when the table suddenly raised itself on one leg, he cried triumphantly, "There you see!"

I examined his hands, which lay relaxed upon the table. He could not have moved the table, which was old and heavy.

"It is certainly remarkable," I said.

He gazed into vacancy and whispered with a veiled, spiritist voice: "Is there any one here?"

The table gave three hard raps on the floor with one leg. We looked at each other, he triumphantly and I with a smile, which grew

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strained as the table scuttled over the floor and finally landed in my lap. I was mystified and sprang up.

"This is nonsensical," I said. But I quickly returned to the table, for my interest had been aroused. "Let us try again."

The table now tilted backward and forward and my lyrical friend explained to me in technical terms how one can converse with a table. You let the table spell by counting the letters with one of the legs. For example, D is four raps, F is five, etc. Three raps denote yes and one rap no, and to my great amusement my friend explained this to the table. It appeared to me to be great sport.

"Is there any one here?" he whispered with his sepulchral voice.

"Yes," replied the table, with three raps.

"Will you tell us who you are?"

"Yes," answered the table.

Then we began to spell and the table began quickly and distinctly to count with the leg until we reached the letter P, where it stopped.

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"—P! . . . go on," said my friend.

The table continued to spell and this time stopped at O. And it continued until it had spelled *poilu*.

"That is my Frenchman," my friend said.

"Idiot!" I exclaimed, for I could not control myself. It was altogether too absurd.

And then my friend said: "We must speak French to him."

But I burst out laughing. "No, if your Frenchman is dead and yet is alive, and if he can leave his grave in Paris and come to Copenhagen and creep up into the leg of my great grandfather's table, then he must also be able to speak Danish. Speak up, if you please, M. *Poilu*!"

"You are blasphemous," said my friend.

"Yes," replied the table, with three hard raps.

"There, you see, he says you are blasphemous. Evidently he understands Danish." Turning to the table, he said: "Is there anything you wish to say to us?"

"Yes," answered the table. And then it

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spelled out very carefully and with many mistakes the sentence: "Vous êtes très magnifiques!"

I arose and said, "He is very witty, your poilu!"

"Is there anything more you wish to say to us?" my friend asked the table.

"No," it answered.

"Well, that was not a very interesting conversation," I exclaimed, as I walked about the room. "We are two precious fools. Now we are sure of that fact. You must promise me not to tell any one that I have danced with my great grandfather's table. This is too utterly absurd."

My friend was very serious. "I can see nothing absurd about it, for I know that it is true. We live when we are dead."

"Mercy on us! And we pass our so-called spirit existence in the legs of tables. That is a charming prospect. Anything else I might be induced to believe, but this is really too idiotic."

"How will you explain it?"

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"How do I know? Inquire of science! It is electricity, magnetism, subconsciousness."

"It is the spirits!"

I seized my friend by his arm and said: "If spirits crawl up table legs and spell French words in my room on a clear afternoon, then spirits must be just as foolish as human beings."

"Why should they not be just as foolish?"

"I truly regret that, for then I can run the risk that you will come at full speed and recite French verses to me when I am resting in Abraham's bosom."

"Who knows?" said my friend, without a trace of irony.

I broke into a hearty laugh and amused myself immensely while I mused over the strange sensation I had had when the table moved under our hands. I knew that it was not a fraud. I could not help admitting that it was a strange, powerful, personal force. Although the whole affair appeared to me so comic, yet it furnished me with something to

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think over. I consented to make another attempt.

This time only a minute passed before the table turned completely around, scuttled with great force across the floor and dropped hesitatingly in my lap. I had a wholly incomprehensible sensation at this occurrence and I looked inquiringly at my friend.

"Now you shall see," he said. "Now there will be some serious result." He asked the table: "Who are you?"

The table hesitated a second, but spelled without a mistake, with hard, powerful, brutal raps—my deceased father's name.

I had an odd sensation in the back of my neck and arose. "No, I will not. This is too horrible."

I do not know why, but I was filled with a sudden feeling of disgust with the whole affair. As long as we dealt with the spirit of a poilu it seemed to me merely amusing, but when the table suddenly spelled my father's name I had a feeling of seriousness that I was unwilling to acknowledge.

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"You are stupid," I said to my friend, but my voice was not wholly firm. "How can you believe it possible that my father, who has been dead twelve years, should be able to come here! No, I will not make a fool of myself any longer."

Nevertheless, I sat down again and could not refrain from placing my hands on the surface of the table and the table immediately began to rap. It spelled again, very quickly and very clearly, "I am your father. I love you."

The nape of my neck grew cold as ice and I wished to remove my hands from the table, but my friend whispered:

"Listen to what he has to say to you!"

And now the table spelled in the same energetic and strange manner as before: "I am father.—Learn that God lives.—I love you. Farewell."

I sat for a short while silent and then let my hands sink down into my lap. I could not rise immediately. I was so deeply moved. But I braced myself and said, in a voice that

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seemed to come from a distance: "No, I have had enough. This is too insane. My father, my dear old splendid father in the leg of a table. And he speaks about God. My father knew no gods."

I paced up and down the floor in the greatest agitation. But my friend sat quietly and glanced at me.

"Did you notice the strange sensation? Was it not wonderful and remarkable?"

"Nonsense," I said brutally, but my voice did not ring clear, for I have never experienced a more remarkable sensation. But of course I could not confess it. "Suggestion, imagination, subconsciousness," I said, and offered other scientific explanations.

But my friend said quietly, "Could you yield to suggestion? Could you be the victim of self-deception? You know that it is true, but you cannot believe it."

His calm irritated me and I exclaimed: "Idiocy! You would have me believe that my father, who died twelve years ago, is living here about me, and that he speaks to me

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through the leg of a table, because you come accidentally and babble something about a poilu."

"Who says that I came here accidentally to-day?"

But I laughed: "If heaven wished to send a prophet to me it would send me a better man than such a mad Danish-French lyrical poet. Get out! Let me alone! It is too idiotic!"

Quietly and with a shrug of his shoulders my friend left me and I sat, raging at myself over my folly and yet pondering over the strangely sweet and tender sensation that I had experienced when the table leg spelled: "I am father!—Learn that God lives!—I love you! Farewell."

V

WE now reach the second remarkable November day. I had again seated myself at my desk and taken out my pile of paper to begin my work again. I had wandered about rather aimlessly and had reflected a little over the spiritistic phenomenon that my friend had shown me, and I thought of it with a certain astonishment. But what affected me most of all was the sensation of a gnawing shame. As I walked the street the blood would mount to my head at the thought that I had sat at a table like another fool and had inquired of the leg about my beloved dead father, whose memory was sacred to me. But what especially filled me with shame was the sensation I had had while I talked with the table. I was in reality shocked at myself because I had actually felt a chill in the back of my neck, because I had felt something of

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that great, strange chill in the body which seizes one on having some very mysterious experience or on passing through some horror.

When I had awakened to a new day and reflected over the events of the day before I grew overwhelmingly despondent. How was it possible? Was my shrewdness not greater than this? Was my critical sense not more developed? Could one be so easily influenced by the mysterious, even if it were mere absurd humbug?

I, who had never experienced anything mysterious, had had a chilly sensation in the back of my neck in my thirty-seventh year because I sat with an hysterical person at a table that rapped on the floor with one leg. The thought of this made me blush. It filled me with an overpowering disgust at my own stupidity, yet, as far as I was concerned, this stupidity had a far greater significance than I could realize at that moment. I was a child and I wished to be a great man. I was a baby and I wished to improve humanity as a poet.

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I must be a credulous person, with not much intelligence to boast of.

I venture to say that I stripped myself bare as I sat there at my desk. To tell the truth, I despised myself completely. I thought of my ignorance about all subjects, my complete lack of substantial knowledge of literature, my empty life, my trivial experiences. And I compared these grievous facts with my overpowering conceit, idiotic vanity and childish ambition. Had I any claim to be ambitious, had I the merest shadow of reason to be conceited?

I glanced at my manuscript and again brushed it aside. Was it not the height of absurdity that such a fool should correct his contemporaries and ridicule grown men and write for grown men?

Although the autumn sun beamed smilingly from the sky, the poet sat with bowed head, filled with the deepest melancholy and a dawning desire for self-effacement. So insignificant was I, so empty, so barren was my imagination, so miserable were my thoughts,

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so pale was my talent that I had eagerly seized the leg of a table in order to be able to believe in the supernatural. So poverty-stricken was my spirit that it had demanded a ghost story in order to revive and induce my heart to beat. And I blushed again at the thought that my heart had really throbbed when the absurd tale expressed itself in an absurd manner under the hands of two absurd fools.

But this must be brushed aside and I would seek to forget this shameful little episode in my life as a poet. I gazed upon the clear autumn sky and rejoiced at the glittering autumn light and a little courage sprang up in my mind as I took up my pen.

While I gazed out of the window to gain strength from the sun and the clear air I put my pen to the paper. After I had sat thus a short while I felt a strange twitching in my fingers. I grasped the pen more firmly, but the strange twitching continued and I glanced down at my paper. Without my paying special attention to it my fingers grasped the pen firmly. It was just like a command, write

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now! But I had no thoughts and I sat for a short while with my pen pressed to the paper and saw my pen glide slowly across it. I thought that it was because I was holding the pen so firmly and relaxed my grasp, but my fingers began to twitch again, the pen put itself firmly between my thumb and forefinger and glided softly over the paper.

Was I nervous? Had the occurrences shaken my nervous system? Why not? There was nothing lacking to humiliate the proud poet. Now I could not even control my own pen.

I sat for a moment to see if my nerves would quiet down, but without my volition the pen glided from one side of the paper to the other. The violent twitching increased. The pen began to write some flourishes, but suddenly stopped and wrote a capital E. I looked at it for a little while and marveled at this new nervous phenomenon. Then the pen wrote a small g. There followed an e, then a d, and again an e. Suddenly it was quickly turned

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round and wrote in a large, legible handwriting: Egede.

I again noticed the chilly feeling in my neck and the perspiration came out on my forehead. "What is this?" I said to myself. "My hand has written 'Egede.' What is Egede? That is certainly something that does not exist in my thoughts."

For the first time it occurred to me that I had heard of another spiritistic phenomenon that was called automatic writing, and I was forced to smile. "Why not?" I said to myself, "if you dance with tables why should you not be able to write automatically?"

I recalled that I had recently read in a newspaper that my favorite author, Conan Doyle, was one day sitting at his desk when his hand suddenly began to write automatically and, by that means, the famous English writer had received mystical communications from the other side of the grave. This had interested me slightly, though I had not regarded it as being anything real. Conan Doyle has written so many mystical things

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and it would be just like him to experiment with such incredible phenomena.

But as I thought about Conan Doyle I regained a little of my self-respect and forgot a little of my shame. For there were really wise and great men who occupied themselves with these phenomena. This automatic writing might perfectly well be an interesting and real phenomenon and I explained it to myself as the poet's subconsciousness working automatically.

This was something that I could perfectly well accept, all the more, as I had observed in my own life that there must be something that was called subconsciousness, a consciousness that at times strives secretly in a writer. For all writers know that there suddenly comes the solution of a problem with which they have for a time struggled in their consciousness and which their consciousness absolutely cannot solve. There is nothing supernatural about that and I even recalled that I had learned this at the University, when I studied philosophy under Höffding. You sleep on a ques-

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tion, that is to say, you put your subconsciousness to work. A thousand times speeches and scenes and situations for my plays had come to me in this way.

Therefore it seemed to me that this so-called automatic writing might very well be a result of a subconscious activity, and I no longer blushed with shame as I again put my pen to the paper in the hope that my hidden consciousness would reveal something of that which my living consciousness could not discover.

My hand began to twitch again and it appeared to me very strange, for I was not at all in a state of trance, such as I had read about. On the contrary, I sat at my desk, quite normal and irritable, after a good breakfast and was vexed at myself and my foolishness. But nevertheless my hand twitched and without the shadow of a thought in my mind my hand wrote with large letters: "Lovely Egede!"

Then the strange twitching ceased and my pen lay dead in my relaxed hand. I reflected, while I felt the curious chill in the back of

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my neck: "If that is my subconsciousness then subconsciousness is a more remarkable phenomenon than Höffding and the other philosophers have supposed." For lovely Egede had appeared in my consciousness and lovely Egede did not form one of the problems that my consciousness could not solve. I was not acquainted with any Egede and had never thought of an Egede who was lovely. It seemed to me to be an incomprehensible expression of the subconsciousness of a normal brain.

But by this time my interest was aroused and I put my pen to the paper again. My fingers twitched and seized the pen firmly and the pen wrote in a large, legible handwriting: "I am Egede. I love you."

The chill returned to the back of my neck and I felt the floor sink under me, and involuntarily I whispered: "Who are you? Are you here?"

"I am Egede," the hand wrote, "I am here. I can see you and I love you."

My brow was bathed with perspiration and

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involuntarily I glanced about the room. There was, of course, nothing unusual to be seen. The sun shone in the street and the clouds sailed through the sky and I sat quite normally at my desk.

Then I held my pen over the paper again and I whispered—against my will, but I could not help it: “Who is Egede? Do I know you?”

“I am your friend,” the pen wrote, “and I know you.”

“Do I not know you?” I whispered.

And then my hand wrote: “You do not know me. I am lovely Egede and I love you.”

I could not stop now, although I still had a feeling of shame, but I whispered hoarsely, embarrassed on my own account: “Who are you?”

“A child,” the hand wrote.

“How old are you?”

“Eight years.”

I paused for a moment and could not restrain a smile, for it was comic in spite of its

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strangeness. It must be confessed that that must be a strange subconsciousness that hits upon that sort of thing.

I inquired further: "Who are your parents?"

And my hand wrote: "Must not."

"May you not say who are your parents?"

"Must not! . . . Lovely Egede, lovely Egede."

"When did you die?" I asked.

"Must not," the hand wrote.

"Do you wish to say more to me?"

"Yes!"

"Then say it!"

"Lovely Egede! Lovely Egede!"

And then Egede disappeared. My pen again lay dead in my hand and I threw myself back in my chair. It seemed pretty certain that I was mad or, if not insane, at least a neurasthenic. I looked about the room. I stood up and paced up and down a few times. I looked in the mirror. I opened the window and looked out. I closed it again. I sat

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down. I got up again. I put my hands up to my head.

Was I mad? I knew that a moment before I had been all right. My nerves must be strung on wires. I had been in the country for almost six months and had been perfectly fit. No emotion of any kind could disturb my consciousness. I had sat quite normally and had almost finished my play.

But now I sat here on a clear afternoon and conversed with my right hand and my hand answered my questions and wrote sentences whose contents bewildered me, with which my consciousness or my subconsciousness had not been occupied at all. It can be understood readily into what a state of confusion I was thrown. What remarkable phenomenon was this? I could understand that a nervous or hysterical person could perhaps let his hand write things of which he himself had scarcely any knowledge. But I! I sat quite soberly and calmly at my desk and followed the gliding of my pen over the paper. And if I restrained the pen, my fingers twitched

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and were pressed more tightly about the pen and the pen wrote, not in my handwriting, but with letters that I had never seen, let alone written.

At this point I must give a little fuller description of these letters and of the way in which my hand moved. I sit quite still and let my hand lie inert upon the desk, with the pen between the thumb and forefinger. My fingers twitch and I feel a strong pressure on my arm. The pen begins to move. It draws rather than writes the letters. In a peculiar, deliberate manner it starts the letter, not where I should begin it, but at the place where it is easiest to write the letter at one stroke, without lifting the hand. If, for example, one wishes to write Egede, it is easy to write E without lifting one's hand, but on reaching g you pause and raise your hand slightly in order to begin on the g. When my hand writes automatically it passes directly from E to g, but in such a manner that it first writes the circle twice and then descends into the tail of the g. Try it and you will

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understand what I mean. In the same way, you will make a slight pause in passing from e to d, and in ordinary writing you will make a complete pause and write the d independently. Try it! But when my hand writes automatically it glides from the e over to the circle of the d and continues to describe the periphery of the circle until it reaches that point on the right side of the circle from which it can glide imperceptibly up and form the neck of the d, then gliding down the neck again and directly over into the last e. Try to write Egede in that way and you will see.

That was the first thing that I substantiated, and in the midst of my surprise over the whole affair I was struck by its ingenuity. I ask the philosophers if they believe that that which hitherto they have called subconsciousness can appear with so great ingenuity and astonish the owner of the subconsciousness himself by such an elaborate art.

The same method that was used with the word Egede was followed with all words. All possible devices were employed to avoid

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stopping and lifting my hand, which I let lie inert upon the desk. I often noted how this remarkable consciousness, or whatever you care to call it, turned and twisted itself along the letters in order to discover an expedient for gliding farther. I have seen my pen go four or five times around in an o before it discovered the way to the next letter, and it was very interesting to observe the manner in which the difficult letter t was written. The pen glided up the neck of the t and glided down again to the middle, then glided in a line to the side and then back, glided in a line out to the other side and back to the neck and thence down and on to the next letter.

When we had finished a word the pen paused and, if I did not move my hand myself, the pen lay inert in my hand. Then suddenly it would give a jerk and my hand passed by short bounds from every word across the paper. I could close my eyes and when I opened them the words stood distinct and clear and separated from each other on the paper. I never knew what word was

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about to come, but my consciousness followed immediately after the letter. As soon as a small portion of the letter was written I could perceive what letter it was, but it was impossible for me to guess the next word. But whenever I anticipated the next word it came quickly and in less legible handwriting. If I guessed at a word and guessed wrong the pen paused and drew a flourish or some lines, and then, when my consciousness had given up the incorrectly guessed word, the pen resumed writing and the correct word came, at times filling me with amazement.

All these details of course did not appear clearly to me that day when, for the first time, my hand went astray, but later I refreshed my memory of these matters and I can at will sit down with my pen and my hand can write as on that remarkable first day. Later I wrote in another style, which I shall describe in the proper place.

Of course I did not enter into particulars the first day I received a visit from Egede. The occurrence was too overpowering and the

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feelings with which I was filled were of so mixed and confusing a nature that I could only repeat in my thoughts this question: "Am I sick? Am I mad? What does it all mean?"

I had not lost control of myself, for that is something that seldom happens to me. I can, when in a passion, lose control of myself and say and do things that otherwise I would never say or do. I can, when I have drunk too much wine, be uncontrollably merry or malicious and laugh immoderately and behave like a fool. But very few other things can disturb my poise. I encounter great events with a certain unconcern. I stood by my father's dead body, when he was suddenly brought in from the street to a hospital, and I accepted it as something quite simple and natural. Only later, much later, the event forces itself into my consciousness in its greatness or its horror. In short, I do not lose my head and am never confused, not because I am dull or lacking in temperament, but some time elapses before I feel what has happened.

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And now, as I confronted these remarkable experiences, I did not lose my self-control. I rested my head in my hands, not so much from bewilderment, but like a scholar who has a difficult problem to solve which he must consider carefully.

So I sat and reflected: "This is interesting. It must be inquired into." But I am no investigator and it is difficult for me to weigh any subject thoroughly. As I have said before, I can feel a thing and my feeling can react, but I cannot settle down and coldly reflect upon the subject, for I cannot reflect. My instinct and my feelings make the decision and reach the conclusion.

But as this was a case that my feeling was forced to reject immediately and, because of its construction, my brain could not consider it, I dismissed it all with a shrug of my shoulders: "Nonsense and imagination! Madness and hallucination!"

After allowing my feeling to react to these matters for a short time, I began to amuse myself with them and to comfort myself with

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the thought that, whatever it was, it was a fit subject for my interest. I lack the desire of the investigator to get to the bottom of a subject and, although the whole thing seemed to me so incomprehensible, I had no difficulty in calming myself with a friendly smile to fate which, in a grievous time, had given me a toy that was extremely interesting.

My investigation did not extend farther that day and when, shortly after, I again seized my pen, it was with the joy and expectation with which a child takes up a new toy.

I do not make myself out deeper than I am and do not seek to embellish my frivolous nature by pretending to be an investigator. I will tell the truth about myself and it does not appear to me to be especially flattering. I dismissed it as a merry jest that for the moment had really made a deep impression on me and had given me impressions of a lofty nature such as everyday events cannot give. I grasped my new toy with an expression as if I would say, "Now we shall have some sport." I touched my pen to the paper and it began

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slowly and in very careful handwriting:
"Egede."

"Now, little Egede," I said, with a smile, quite familiarly and with only a slight feeling of shame, "do you wish to say more to me?"

My hand wrote again: "Lovely Egede!" Then my pen lay for a moment inert in my hand, while I was filled with vexation, for this was a rather unsatisfactory pleasure.

But as I sat, vexed and impatient, my fingers began to twitch more sharply than ever. In suspense I awaited the result and the pen increased its speed and in large letters it wrote across the whole surface of the paper: "Father."

I stopped and bent over the paper, but I immediately felt that I did so because of a pressure on my shoulders. Then my fingers twitched, the pen rested firmly in my hand and it wrote: "I am father. I am your father and I am here. I live and I can see you. My dear son, I live."

The pressure disappeared from the back of my neck and my pen again lay inert in my

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hand and I drew a deep sigh. I felt as if I had to draw several deep breaths before I could raise my head and look about the room. The stillness seethed in my ears and my cheeks burned. I had no time for further consideration, but was suddenly filled with a feeling of activity and, seizing my pen, I again touched it to the paper. Drawing a deep breath, I bent my head slightly and my pen wrote:

I am your father. I am here; I live. Do you remember my handwriting as it was in my prime, which you could never imitate? It is I and you are my beloved son. I have come to tell you that I live and shall live for ever; that you shall never die; that no one dies. My dearly beloved boy, I have much to relate but you cannot endure this. Do not think, but listen to what I shall say to you. That which I shall reveal to you is wonderful and radiant. I live and you can never die. When you die you shall live. No one dies, but all shall live eternally and see God.

My own boy, my beloved child, I come like the lightning through the air and place myself in the back of your neck and write with your

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hand! God lives! My dear son, my own boy, I come like the lightning through the air and whisper in your thought: Man cannot die

For this reason I have come to-day. All these strange things have happened to-day and now you know it. You shall know the truth about these things and I shall tell it to you. My best friend in life, my son, my child, this is your father who is speaking to you, this is your father who is writing with your hand. Now your eyes weep and your heart trembles. Smile to me, my dear boy, and I shall go away happy. But I shall return whenever I may, but you cannot endure more now. I shall come to you again and we shall never be parted.

My son, your father is going away. Smile to me. Farewell!

FATHER.

My pen fell from my hand, silence surged in the room and there I sat. There I sat and on the desk before me lay a letter from my father, written by my hand, in his handwriting, genuine and correct in the most minute details. I took the letter and examined it care-

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fully. I read it again and again and I wept again. My heart trembled with a tenderness I have seldom felt. The letter lay on my desk, the letter from my father, who had died twelve years ago.

Marvelous! marvelous! For it was true and I felt it now. Remarkable and radiant, for my eyes were filled with tears and my cheeks burned. Incomprehensible and inexplicable, but it was the truth. It was incredible, it was incredible, and yet I knew it, for I had seen and felt it. But I could not believe it.

VI

I DO not care to make any comments on this letter immediately, but prefer to continue my account. I shall, however, remark at this point that, although I was filled with the deepest and most extraordinary feelings, the predominating feeling was despondency.

Many will not understand me and will assume that when I was really convinced that I had had a supernatural, incomprehensible, miraculous experience, I must be filled with joy over the new and wonderful phenomenon. I imagine that many persons would have gone out rejoicing to their friends and relatives, in order that all might participate in the miracle.

But it had quite a different effect upon me. I leaned back with a sweet and tender feeling in my heart, unable to forget the mystical but

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sweet mood that I entered while my hand wrote the letter from my father in *his own* handwriting. But after I had collected myself and reflected over what had happened I was overwhelmed with melancholy—because I could not explain it away.

I knew that it was neither my waking consciousness nor my so-called subconsciousness. I knew that a mysterious force had overpowered me and compelled my hand to write. This was perfectly clear to me. No other explanation was possible. I had sat calmly at my desk, quite sober, prepared, in fact, to seize upon the slightest proof that there was self-deception, suggestion, anything rather than the mystical or the supernatural. I knew this, but I would not, I could not, believe it. The whole thing seemed to me so contrary to all that I could believe and think. I was filled with a strange, helpless melancholy, for I felt that it was impossible, absolutely impossible to give a natural explanation of the phenomenon.

I believe that my despondency proceeded

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from the fact that I was forced to yield to the powerful emotion to which my father's letter subjected me; I was forced to yield to the sweet, incredible and yet beautiful feeling which the strange writing of my hand aroused in my heart. I had felt it as something divine, but when I sat quietly and sought to weigh the matter it was impossible for me to believe in the fact. I could not, I did not, wish to believe it. It was opposed to my convictions and I sought and sought for an intelligent explanation of the phenomenon.

But all in vain. The only possible explanation was madness, absolute madness and hallucination. But in my despondency I was forced to reject this explanation, for I was not insane, and, in any case, insane persons are not in the habit of harboring doubts about the monomanias that constitute their insanity.

The only possible explanation, therefore, was that it was true. My father lived and could visit me and write with my hand. Upon this fact depended important results: It must be equally true that my father had

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spoken to me through the leg of a table. It can be understood readily that a born skeptic and scoffer could not accept such an explanation of the phenomenon, and yet there was no other possible explanation than this ridiculous one. Therefore I was despondent, although I knew that I had had an extraordinary experience.

I believe that I should have had a slight feeling of self-contempt if I had immediately accepted the explanation that the incredible was true, for then I could not be a normal being. The intelligence must reject the inconceivable and this was something that was inconceivable to me. Only a weak brain, a naïve person could be persuaded of the truth of what had happened, for I hold absolutely that the stronger and more virile a man is, the more forcibly will he reject whatever he cannot understand or explain. Doubt about what cannot be grasped or comprehended cannot be rooted out of the mind of a man of strong character.

As will be seen in the following pages, since

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then I have had experiences far greater and more remarkable and convincing, but I have never been able to remove the doubt in my mind. Of every remarkable experience I have had I have said, "This has happened, it is a fact, but I cannot believe in it." The whole of this book, in which I have bound myself to the most exact truth, has roused in me the greatest doubt, and with a despondent heart I read it and say: "It is true, it has all happened, but it is difficult for me to believe it."

There have been terrible days, when my despondent doubt struggled within me. I cannot get away from the skepticism of that which I know to be true. I know that what I have written is true, I have felt it and I have seen it. I have experienced the miracle and I have seen it cast me trembling and weeping to the ground. My heart has been torn by the greatest joy, the most inconceivable emotion—and yet, I cannot help doubting. In the midst of the most divine experiences I have brushed aside all this, which was as clear

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as day, all that was miraculous and incredible, and I have said to myself, "There must be some explanation of all this."

I am no religious doubter whose faith is in danger, for I believe in nothing. I only *know*, but I cannot help doubting that which I know and have seen, although the doubt is far more foolish than the belief would be. I am no "doubting Thomas," demanding facts. I am convinced and have received the facts, but I hate the facts because I cannot elude them.

That day when I received the first letter from my father I had little difficulty in finding explanations and I still had as a last resort my madness, hallucination and suggestion. I believe that I should have been satisfied if I could have settled the matter with one of these explanations. But I could not accept them, because they seemed to me improbable.

Undoubtedly many will consider it remarkable that I immediately struggled against myself and ridiculed myself, seeking all possible means to reject what I had experienced, al-

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though it would be so wonderful for me if it were true. But I was then as I still am, the friend of my mockers. I can most readily understand the person who will say about me that I am mad or that I suffer from an hallucination, for I should say the same thing about any one else who told what I tell. I feel that all the fools of the earth are justified at my hands. To the day of my death I shall ridicule any one who believes in anything supernatural and mystical without having knowledge of it, and I believe that all such conceptions appeal to that class of the human race whose brains are the weakest, those men whom I should call fools. When I declare to men that there is a God and that men continue to live after they die, I feel that I am using the speech of fools. I am a skeptic and a scoffer and I believe that I shall never change. For I believe that the strong man, who shall experience life, who knows life and who loves life, *cannot* be fully convinced of the glory of death. I believe that the blasphemer is stronger than the pious man. I

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believe that the blasphemer fulfills the human demands of life to a higher degree than the God-fearing man, who folds his hands, and he who has no use for God may refute God. I believe that he, in whose veins the blood pulses most powerfully, must be skeptical about life after death. I believe that the *living* man must hate death and that he who feels the pulse of life beating in his veins and in his heart must scoff at the dead, who are spirit. And when I feel impelled to doubt and to scoff and to be the friend of scoffers, I believe that this is because I am alive and because I dearly love life and because I meet the conditions for living. My impulse, my blood, my intelligence tell me the pious are the weak ones, the believers are those that *cannot* live, the God-fearing ones are mere wrecks, who drag themselves to the grave and whose lives are useless.

This is my theory of life and it is rooted in me. No miracle can stifle my life; and the theory of life that a person holds is his very life, for it is life that lives and throbs within

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him. Nothing in heaven and earth can wrest my life from me. I live, and the most powerful force within me is my instinct of self-preservation and this instinct is so strong, so mighty that no God, no dead father, no spirit, no miracle could induce me to give up my life and forget my instinct, and skepticism is my instinct of self-preservation.

But, they have spoken to me from the other side of the grave—I do not believe them. They speak again—and I doubt. I tremble with doubt, but the superior power convinces me and when I am convinced I doubt again. I can but doubt and I *must* be convinced.

And now I shall continue with my narrative and you will read about something that you will probably not believe, but which I know is true. You will read about things that I have seen and heard and about whose truth I have not the slightest doubt, although I must doubt and cannot help doubting.

VII

I HAVE now given a careful account of the feelings that overpowered me after I had received the first letter from my father. I have entered into such details because I consider it necessary in this account to follow quite systematically the development through which I passed. It will be seen that it is far from my purpose to take the part of a prophet or preacher. Everything that I communicate here I communicate with a gnawing doubt in my innermost being. But at the same time I feel that I *must* and shall communicate it. I feel that, in writing this book, I am obeying a command. I know that it is all strange and marvelous, but I cannot transform myself; I cannot persuade myself of the truth of what I know, and the reader will see the little apologetic smile with which I accompany every statement. For in the

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midst of my feeling of something exalted and marvelous I note a blush of shame, which none of my experiences could wholly remove.

But I must continue and communicate the next letter that I received from my father. I had again thought the matter over and persuaded myself that I had been the victim of a hitherto unknown form of hallucination and self-deception. I sat at my desk with the intention of completing my dramatic treatment of the exploits of Big Claus. This was the principal character in my new comedy and I expected great things from this figure, which was selected from that gold-*milieu*, where distress and pain existed in the bright light of gold and superfluity. I can claim now, since it can never be contradicted, that I had devised a new and ingenious method for the treatment of a subject that had been worn thin by dramatic artisans, containing a wealth and interest, which, properly handled, would transform it into a universal subject. I am not afraid to say this now. I knew that I should succeed and, as a result, I had felt something of my

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youthful courage surging in my veins, as I approached the completion of my play. I had congratulated myself that I was so skilled in the dramatic art that I knew I could dazzle a whole world of credulous theater-goers. Although my heart whispered to me that my blood did not flow in my comedy and that, therefore, it was not a real work of art at all, I sat and in imagination counted the kroners and dollars and pounds and marks that I would earn. I lived in the gleam of gold, and this gleam dazzled my heart.

This is a bitter truth I tell, but I must tell the truth, even if it be humiliating. I knew the truth that day when I sat at my desk, although it was not as clear to me as it is now. In any case, I persuaded myself that truth was an exile on this earth and that as I was neither stupid nor an idealist, I should take my pen and write.

And I took my pen, but I did not write. A strange lassitude seized me, although a minute before I had been full of vigor and ready to start work, in spite of these secret voices and

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base truths. I felt dull and leaned back in my chair, filled with invincible disgust with this work. My eyes twitched and I gaped. Without comprehending this sudden disinclination, I sighed at the thought of another wasted day so late in the season that I could not afford to lose a single hour.

I straightened up again and took my pen, but let it rest on the paper and the strange twitching again appeared in my hand. I felt as if some one had seized me by the back of the neck. All my lassitude disappeared. The remarkable sensation of the preceding day had returned. Whether I would or not I was forced to yield and my pen wrote the following letter to me:

MY DEAR BOY,

I am here again. Now you have rested and have regained your courage. Your doubt has almost wholly vanished and you are almost convinced that I am merely a nervous phenomenon or some other indifferent and ephemeral thing. But you are mistaken, my friend. I am your father and your father seizes you

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by the nape of the neck and presses the pen into your hand. Can you feel my strength? See how the pen splutters. Do you doubt that it cannot be yourself or your subconsciousness or motor activities or whatever you call all that humbug?

No, my boy, I am your father and I am sitting here in your hand, just as strong and just as real as I was twelve years ago, before I died. I see your eyes staring wildly about the room, while your hand writes and you feel a severe pain in your neck and in your fingers. Shall I show you my strength, since you will not believe in me? See how heavy the letters are, feel how I press your arm; do you see, my friend——

The penholder broke and I glanced about in utter bewilderment. I had never before had such an experience, and this was absolutely certain. My knees trembled and cold shivers ran down my back. But I seized another pen and touched it to the paper and it wrote immediately:

There you see! I broke the penholder in your hand and, if you do not believe in me, at

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least provisionally—but you do. I perceive your fear and feel the cold in your neck. . . . I merely wished to show you my strength. My dear boy, I am not a vapory phantom, which hovers about the room and with an effort lifts table legs and complains sentimentally in my son's hand. I am a spirit. But I am a powerful spirit and I am your father's spirit, but a thousand times larger and a thousand times stronger than the weak, tender spirit that dwelt in the father you loved so dearly.

I could smash your desk and crush all your tables into dust. It is absurd for you to believe that we are weak, complaining phantoms, which sorrowfully hover about the dear ones we left on the earth. For that is not the case. It is all quite different from what you imagine or have dreamed of. But I have come to you, my dear son, to relate to you the secret concerning these matters.

You believe that there is something that we must not tell and that I shall reveal secrets to you—you see, I can read your thoughts. You need not inquire of the spirit, for it knows your thought before you yourself know it. I will tell you concerning this, that I cannot reveal any secrets to you and no spirit can re-

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veal any secret to human beings. Human beings cannot understand that which is secret, for that which is secret cannot be grasped by the human brain.

You perceive now a force in your hand which you know cannot be your own and at this moment you *know* that it is I. I write so firmly and in such large characters that you can almost hear my voice. And I speak in your pen and I speak so fast that the pen sticks to the paper and you stare fixedly at this miracle.

My dear boy, I am your father and when I come to you it is not as a whimpering spirit, seeking his beloved son, whom he misses. And I do not come to you because you have sought your father. For you do not need me. I love you because I am your father and because I am a spirit. But I do not complain, for I have always been able to be with you in your heart and in your thought and I know the most carefully hidden secret of your mind and I know every thought you have ever had in your whole life. This is the nature of the spirit and I must teach it to you. I shall teach you much more. You shall become wiser than most peo-

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ple and I shall teach you to think with my thoughts and I shall teach you to write.

I said, the last time I was with you, that I came like the lightning through the air and fixed myself in your thought and wrote with your hand. This is true. It is a characteristic of the human spirit that it can travel millions of miles and return in the same second. I can pat the cheek of the little Geisha in Tokio and a second after I can rattle the leg of your great grandfather's table. That sounds miraculous, and at the same time it sounds amusing for I see a smile on your lips. But it is the truth, although the truth is lofty and absurd. I shall teach you something concerning these matters that you have never dreamt of. Man's spirit is eternal. It knows neither time nor space and it cannot forget when it leaves the body and is transported into eternity, where it sees God's face. You must know this now, even if you do not understand it, for we must get started. And this is the beginning and this is the end: my son, God exists and the human spirit is eternal and divine.

I have disturbed your head enough for to-day, although what I have told is not a mil-

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lionth part of what I know, and you will have enough to think over after I have spoken. You will believe that you have lost your mind, but before the morrow I shall give you a proof of my strength and you shall feel a trembling in your heart and a joy, such as you have never dreamt of and never could have dreamt of.

And now I shall close by telling you why I have come to you and why I prepared you for all this through a series of mystical and half absurd trifles, which began with my appearance as a French poilu in your great grandfather's table leg. For that was I, to be sure, it was I! We creep in table legs and later you will learn why and how.

I come as your father and as your father I seize you by the nape of the neck and you have felt it. I seize hold of you at your desk and I say to you: write! But, my son, I am not a sentimental spirit that admiringly hovers over his son's head. And I will tell you that I have come to make a man of you. From now on you can do only what I tell you to do; from now on you are mine and must obey me.

Listen, my dear boy, to what I have to say to you. We shall now begin a new life and

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we shall begin by sweeping into the waste-paper basket that pile of manuscript, through which you have waded with such energy and anticipation every day, until I came and disturbed you. Now you will not believe your own eyes and now for the first time you really believe that you are crazy. Your father's spirit comes from on high and disturbs and hinders you in your play-writing and ruins your plans for the future. Your father's spirit does this, my dear boy, because I love you and now I shall speak to you so that you will understand me and feel that I caress your hair and speak to my beloved son, the fairest thought of my life.

Do you notice something trembling deep down in your mind? I feel it and I see that your eyes are filled with tears, but you shall hear what I have to tell you.

There will now come a new age in the world and no one will be able to understand that men could live in the age that has passed away. A new age will rise with the sun in all quarters of the earth and God will smile to men.

Now listen to what I shall tell you. Your father is not dead. He lives and he has seen God's face. Your father has come to tell you

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the truth about the human spirit and God. My dear boy, do you grasp the strange, indescribable, marvelous thing I tell you. Your father has been given permission to come to you and speak to your heart. The foolish little man, who did not know life before he died, has been given permission to teach his beloved son something that he was unable to teach him while he lived on the earth. The mad little musician has been given leave to speak to his son's heart and to teach him to write about God's smile.

Yes, my boy, that is the word that shall denote the new age in the world. God's smile! that is the word that shall bring men to raise their hands and to turn their eyes blinded with tears to the horizon and see the new dawn, which is God's smile. My dearly beloved son, my all on earth, I see your eyes are wet with tears. Weep, my beloved, and God will smile in your heart. For men's tears are God's smile.

Listen to what I tell you, my dear son. Let your heart tremble with joy and go out and kiss your old mother. Her child shall learn about God's smile. Embrace your brothers and your sister, for your father has come to

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you to teach you to tell men about God's smile.

I see now that you weep and I feel your dear heart beating. Weep, my dear boy, and smile to me and let your heart tremble, for this is the greatest day of your life.

Now I am going away, and after I have left you doubt and despondency will again grip you. But from now on you cannot be unhappy. Even if you doubt, because this wonderful thing that you have heard is so incomprehensible, you will never be able to forget this day, and you will never be able to forget the tender sweetness that you felt in your heart the first time I told you about God's smile. And when your heart whispers, "God's smile," your eyes will grow dim and you will tremble with an unspeakable tenderness. And when men's eyes grow dim and they are choked with tears, then God will smile to them.

And now farewell—

YOUR FATHER.

VIII

MY DEAR BOY,

You seat yourself at your desk with a sigh, to see if the madness will return. I am here immediately and you must write. You shake your head, but await with interest to see what your hand will write.

These are extraordinary days and you go about and are almost convinced that you have been dreaming, and yet you are more indifferent than one would expect, and you ponder less. This is not remarkable, for I am with you all the time. You are as I wish you to be. I follow you on your way to town, I give you your suggestions, I place you at your desk and I calm you.

That which you have heard is strange, but it has not yet fully possessed you, for you are such a godless fellow. When I tell you about God's smile, your heart trembles, but it is partly your literary heart that glows. For you have not yet comprehended in the least the great, the marvelous, the incomprehensible

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experience that you have had, and it will be some time before you understand it and comprehend it deep down in your soul. But so let it be, for I have much to tell you and we must get to work.

This is still a mere game for you and when you go about doubting and almost forgetting the jest in which you engage at home at your desk, you are a quite natural phenomenon. For you *have* been deeply moved in your soul, your heart has beaten wildly in your body, you have shed streams of tears and, sobbing with joy, you have laid your head on your arm on the desk before you. You have never before experienced anything like this, you have never before been so moved, and at times you perceive the abyss that yawns before you. You know that you can never be yourself again, as you were before I came. You know that if I forsook you now your life would end.

Note how you are chilled at the mere thought. Rest assured, my boy, I shall not forsake you and you are not through with your life. Your life began on the day that I came and now you shall begin to live. Smile to me, my friend, for I come bringing life to you.

You are surprised that, although you think

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that you understand a little concerning the great things about and in you, you go about so indifferently, and that it all appears to you like a fleeting dream. But, as I have already told you, this is all my work. I shall teach you how to understand these things, but I must proceed systematically and not direct you at random. You must realize that I have expended much energy on you. Otherwise how do you suppose that you could have the most incredible experiences and then walk about and smoke your cigars and chat with people and attend the theater in the evening, without devoting a single thought to the whole matter?

You believe—yes, my dear boy, I know all your thoughts—and you believe that if one of the so-called psychic investigators had had such a tremendous spiritistic experience the whole spiritistic camp would be in a turmoil. For it is perfectly clear to you that your experience is so great because it has been so unquestionable, so powerful and so clear. Nevertheless you preserve it as a sweet secret, which you would never think of revealing, but you cannot comprehend its purpose, for you have

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made no investigations and you are not a spiritist.

While you are sitting there at your desk so delightfully calm with clear eyes, after eight hours of undisturbed sleep, I shall use the time to work with you and I shall tell you a little about all those things that interest the world so greatly.

Do not think too much and do not interrupt me. I know your questions. They will all be answered in turn when we reach the proper time for answering them. I forget nothing, for we have an absolutely sure system and nothing disappears from our memory. When the time for answering a question has come I simply let the question emerge from your consciousness.

Great is our might. Now you shall hear. But be patient; we shall work for many hours.

In the first place, I will tell you that the table tilting is genuine. I see your face, I feel your thought. You think it is grievous that we must part, for this you cannot accept. The whole thing is madness and you are grieved that our acquaintance should last so short a time. But, my dear boy, you must not dismiss me without listening to me, and you

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will not do so, for you *cannot* do other than what I will.

The table legs do not lie, not always. From the dawn of time men have played with table legs and we have joined in the game. This appears to you so absurd, so dreadful and so loathsome. All your intelligence reacts against this immeasurable absurdity and you are quite right, for can anything appear more hopelessly idiotic? But after I have instructed you more fully and you have learned our laws, you will understand it better. I say laws, but that is the wrong word. We have no laws here, but we have certain qualities and our qualities are eternal, unchangeable.

Tables can dance! Yes, they can! You have seen and felt it yourself. It is the spirits that move the tables—no, my friend, we shall not part now; you must be patient. Spirits move the tables and it is not animal magnetism or subconsciousness or motor activities of the muscles—it is none of all those things that science has so ingeniously traced out. It is your dead that speak to you, for this method is a game, an incomprehensible thing, and therefore it is permitted.

Men are allowed to know that we live and

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are happy. When people seat themselves round a table with their hands resting on it and the table tilts and raps with its legs, it is we that come and speak to them. I feel that it will be difficult for me to convince you of the truth of this, but when you have heard everything I have to tell you will realize the naturalness of this table tilting, even if it is absurd.

It often happens that tables will not tilt or that they utter the most inconceivable absurdities. Some persons consider the table tilters to be incredible fools and others wholly deny the truth of table tilting, because they have no opportunity of seeing it. But it can all be explained and I shall tell you everything. But do not plague my thought with your thousands of questions, for then I shall be forced to answer immediately and our exposition will lack clearness.

Men may know that God lives, and they may know that we live, and they may talk with us. But at this point I will answer the question that all ask: "Why do they not learn about it? To what end all this humbug? And why has humanity groaned and suffered through the centuries without having learned

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the truth about these matters? Why should it be so difficult for us to give you information, although human beings before you have gone into their graves and have been kept back in the gloom of ignorance? Wherefore? wherefore?" Be patient, my dear friend, and you shall hear.

Human beings have not been kept in darkness through the centuries without getting information, for they have all been told. All the people that have died have been given information and certainty. Only the people that are now living have not been informed, but they will learn when they die and there will be no injustice in the world. There is no injustice in the world. Justice is the same for all men. Justice will be dealt out with perfect consistency, but you must not learn about that to-day. I cannot answer all your questions at once.

I shall now return to your first question, which, for the time being, is the most important. Why are men not informed? And why are they informed in such an absurd manner through tables and mediums and other foolishness? I shall answer this question as clearly as I can and as exhaustively as you are capable

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of understanding me. The true significance of existence is life, and men shall live. Men shall love life and hate death. for death is the obliteration of life. But if the great miracle should occur, that God descended to men, or that the sun suddenly rose in the four quarters of the earth, as we so beautifully and figuratively said in our last letter, men would cease to be men, for they would all long for death and for God, and that is not man's purpose.

Men are men and men shall live, for the life upon the earth is man's life and it cannot be otherwise. Life has its laws and the world you know has its laws and these laws cannot be altered, for they are the work of God. Man lives and struggles from the cradle to the grave. So it has always been and always shall be. The sun rises and the sun sets. The light shines and the heart beats. For thousands of years men have studied life and themselves and the light and the universe, and all that men are capable of understanding they have discovered. They know the laws of all life and of the circuit of the world and the movements of the planets and the life of plants and of animals. And all these things through all eternity have been immutable. Man has been

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the lord of the earth. Men can predict all earthly things. They know when they die and why they die. They have comprehended the swarming life on earth and can understand everything—except death and what comes before life and after death. This is not man's affair but God's. All this is a secret to men, for men cannot understand it. What I shall now tell you about these things and what I shall now reveal and disclose to you confidentially you will never really be able to understand. You will employ your human intelligence to explain my words and doubt will arise in you, for you are a human being and subject to the laws of humanity. You are life on the earth and subject to the laws of life, and no man will ever come to *know* that which he cannot understand. No man can comprehend God, for man does not grasp the divine. If he did he would not be human. Life is the same now and through all eternity, and it will never grow different.

But it is granted to you to know that God exists and that you will live eternally. You may know everything, for we keep no secrets from you. We will do everything to enable you to believe in the miraculous, in order that

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you may be able to believe, to *know* the miraculous. But you can never come to *know* anything, for you can never *know* that which you do not understand.

It is for this reason that miracles never occur in the world—and cannot occur, in a human sense. The sun will not rise in the four quarters of the earth. The moon will not put on a hat, for this would be contrary to the laws of the world and the purpose of life. In reality a thousand miracles occur every day, but you do not understand them. And now you think that it is a miracle that you write with my hand. It surely is a miracle, but can you wholly believe in it deep down in your soul? Even if you can believe in it and know that it is true, it is incomprehensible to you. Therefore you must doubt. You cannot prove it and people will be able to refute you. Nothing happens in the world, in human life, which, in some way or other, cannot be refuted and made doubtful by man's divine acumen. Thus it is and it cannot be otherwise. He who is permitted to witness a miracle is also permitted to doubt concerning it. He who sees the great truth and God's smile and the wonders of the universe, is also

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permitted to doubt, or we deprive him of the ability to prove it. For men shall be men and the life of man shall be human, and no human being is a god, and nothing human becomes divine, for in that case he would cease to be human.

Have you any conception of the infinitely remote wisdom in these matters, or are you disappointed because you do not think that the world will progress in this way? The world will progress greatly. A new age will arise and God will smile upon men. But all this will come about in a manner different from what you conceive, for it is divine and you cannot conceive of the divine.

Let us pause, for we must not be philosophers. I will explain to you in human terms why miracles do not occur. Miracles and wonders are the enemies of life. If man awoke in his bed in the morning and saw the patent proof of God and eternal life and eternity—my boy, use your imagination. What would happen? Who could endure this? Man shall be the lord of the earth and live his life and make the earth subject to him. If, however, man knew with certainty and was granted proof that God lives and that man merely

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fulfills the will of God and nothing else, what a worm would man not be! If man could conceive that none of his thoughts or actions were his own, that he could not make the slightest movement except under compulsion—what would life be then? Does not human history show that the wiser humanity became and the more it saw and the more it learned, the better it understood the laws of life? The higher a man mounts, the more he advances in personality, power and ability. The greater a man is, the better he understands himself and his power, the more he knows about life and his own strength. It is hard to have to say it and you are quite right in this, my boy. The more foolish men are and the weaker is their understanding, the more easily do they believe in all mystical matters. The man who has reached the farthest in understanding struggles against this, for he must and shall struggle, for this is one of the proofs of his development. If a miracle occurred on the earth it would be God's struggle with his whole undertaking. It would be God's struggle with man in his highest development—and so, dear children, rest easy, no miracles

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will occur in the sense in which you grasp the word.

What is a human being? Alas! dear friend, if I should answer all your questions we should never finish. You must practice patience, for at present we are talking only about table tilting and other spiritistic absurdities. Let us keep to that subject, if we can. But I cannot refrain from casting some light on that question. I will answer you and then you can see if you understand me.

Human beings are God's thoughts. Therefore human beings are of God. Man is not lord of the earth, as he believes, but he shall believe so, for he shall live according to God's determination. When I said before that life is immutable throughout eternity, I was quite right. For the laws of life are unchangeable and the highest intelligence will not believe in that which it cannot understand. The elect man is he who, with the greatest acuteness, forces his way through all questions, who has the best understanding of all secret matters.

He who believes that he has penetrated divine affairs does not need to be a great man, for he has not grasped it with his understand-

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ing. Many fools and weak persons have seen miracles, which revealed God's presence to them. But they have not grasped them with their understanding, for the human understanding cannot grasp it. Still their understanding has not prevented them from believing, for they are fools and weak persons.

If you think that I shall repeat to you the words of the Bible concerning the simple, you are on the wrong track. We do not rejoice over the simple and we do not rejoice over the wise, for they are all as they shall be, and the simple will become wise and the wise have been simple. Man mounts higher and higher. He who has the greatest intelligence has fulfilled God's purpose in that particular, and he who has the greatest heart has advanced farthest in that particular. But the great intellect shall obtain the greatest heart and the fool shall obtain the greatest understanding and all men shall become alike throughout eternity.

Your questions have beguiled me into speaking about matters that we are not yet wise enough to talk about. Let us return to our point of departure. But I must conclude this little excursion with a remark that I had forgotten. Life itself is divine; the source of

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life is divine. The great Why, Whence and Whither are divine and the spirit of man is divine and eternal.

When I speak of the great man and of the great understanding I do not speak of the spirit of man, but I speak of man as he is while he lives on the earth. In every man there dwells the divine, but not all men can feel it. Often the great understanding lives his whole life without feeling the divine. This is the purpose and his destiny. But he upon whom God smiles feels the divine. If God smiles upon the heart of the great understanding, it trembles and the understanding perceives that the spirit is God but cannot comprehend it, because God is incomprehensible to man's understanding.

He upon whom God has smiled can never be unhappy, and this miracle points far out into eternity, far beyond that which you foolish children regard as miracles.

But to return to the table, to which we must now cling. So, my dear friend, we speak through table legs and some believe in us and others do not and we make very little effort to induce you to believe. Those that shall believe must of necessity believe, for they have

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no choice. The others must laugh and scoff, and that is quite natural.

You have heard many accounts of absurd ecstatic spiritistic séances. This is not strange, for the world is overpopulated with fools and simpletons and impostors. When you hear of something quite fantastic you can always assume that it is not true. But we have our purpose in everything that we do. We do nothing without a purpose. Everything has an object and the life of the spirit after death is so comprehensive, so interesting and so inconceivable that it would serve no good end to speak further about it.

If two persons play with a table, there is no reason to tell them anything. If for any reason they ought to have some little faith in it, then one of us comes. If a person must be convinced, we can convince him. If I wish to convince a negro in Africa with the sole purpose in view of his convincing an Indian in America so that the Indian shall foretell something to an English lady, which she shall believe in order to write such and such a thing to her niece in Russia, so that the niece in Russia shall say this or that to her friend in the Caucasus, then I convince the negro in

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Africa. Do you grasp this circumnavigating activity? My friend, there is a great truth in the words of your Bible: "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground but that our heavenly Father sees it."

So millions of remarkable instances occur. If I have a sensible purpose I am apt to appear as Napoleon in a table leg in Skindergade and as Leonidas in a table leg in Newcastle. We do everything, we can devise anything.

But we never do anything evil. We know only the good and all our endeavors and all that we do are God's purpose. This sounds incomprehensible. But we must continue, for you are in such a fine mood and nothing in your dull mind disturbs you.

We enter the table legs and we falter and grope about. We spell incorrectly and we spell in foreign languages and the dear people address us tremblingly and in the languages which they, in their naïveté, think we understand best. Perhaps they ought to know that it does not matter what they say. We see what they think, we see their lives, we know their thoughts throughout their whole lives, we can answer unspoken questions in all languages.

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We do not have to spell incorrectly, we are not tired and melancholy. We remember everything. We are always happy. We could smash the tables to pieces and throw down the walls. We disappear through impenetrable and fireproof walls. This is the truth and your intelligence will tell you that if there is any truth in these matters it is this.

But when we perform all this humbug we follow our laws. Not our laws, for, as I have said, we have none, but our qualities, which we cannot deny. Everything that we do has a purpose. When I appeared as a deceased Danish poet at a table-tilting in the home of an actor on Bornholm it was for the purpose of rousing to reflection a man who was present in order that he might inspire the man who visited you and brought along a poilu in the table leg.

When we spell incorrectly and use lofty terms we have a purpose with that too. That is what you want and we are always as you wish us to be or as it is to your advantage for us to be. You must understand this: When you ask stupid questions, you receive oracular replies; when you wish us to make predictions, we answer very mysteriously but quite

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at random; but we never harm you and we never say anything that can do any injury. We know everything about you and know you all, but a table leg has never revealed a secret or spread slanders, which surely ought to be evidence that we are not in any case human beings.

But we must proceed, for we have much more to tell about spiritistic phenomena. We shall hurriedly touch upon all the humbug that confuses the world and that is certainly devised in order to confuse the world. The world must be confused, for nothing can be proved about these things. We give miraculous communications through tables, but at some point or other there is always a gap. You will perceive this if you will examine everything that has been published on this subject. The gap is often very small, but somewhere it is to be found. There is always an exposure by which you catch a glimpse of fraud or stupidity or madness.

Nothing is so fully demonstrated that it can convince the world. This will always be true. You have read a little about spiritistic methods and other humbug of that kind. It is almost always fraudulent, and even where there

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is an element of truth it can almost always be proved to be a fraud. I do not claim that spirits have never appeared, for I am not an authority, and I am not here to tell the whole truth, for no one shall know the truth. I merely tell you as much as you can understand. More I cannot tell, for that which you cannot understand is a secret to you. The human spirit is not a wise little god hovering in space. The spirit is the spirit of a man, having the same qualities it had when it dwelt in the flesh. It is not evil and it knows God, and he who knows God is in certain respects wiser than the wisest human beings. But when the spirit takes its abode in a man the spirit is human and cannot be otherwise than it was when it abode in its own body.

Naturally there are many spirits, if I may use the expression, that have behaved irregularly. But nothing irregular can occur, for it may not occur. If you could imagine that a naïve spirit was beguiled into showing miraculous things, you must at the same time understand that this miracle is immediately obliterated. For no spirit can say and do anything without the knowledge of all, and what I am telling you is understood and heard by mil-

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lions and millions. Painful as it is to me, I must now proceed to speak of the worst excesses of spiritism, the materialization of spirits, and the most foolish delusions of science, telepathy and hypnosis. The materialization of spirits is, of course, humbug, and telepathy and hypnosis do not exist as the conceptions recognized by science.

Now you are surprised, for this interests you immensely. But there is no limit to the bewilderment I have in store for you, my dear boy. If I neglected your spiritual training while I lived on the earth, I shall truly after my death make up for what I neglected while I, poor fool, staggered confusedly about in life.

My dear boy, let us now see what a medium is. You are confused when I mention this name. This is not strange, for your thoughts are involved in a vortex of misunderstandings, fraud and madness when we speak of mediums. In this connection there is much fraud. In the proper meaning of the word there are no mediums and there are no rules. The whole thing is a farrago of concepts, misunderstandings and trickery, in all of which we excel. I say we, for human beings have

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no control over this. We play with them, for this is our special field.

When you use a stranger as spokesman for the dead you proceed with a solemnity and an absurdity, at which we should smile, if it were not that, in the final analysis, we ourselves bore the responsibility for it all. We shall not treat this part of the subject fully, since it does not interest us greatly and we should grieve a large number of persons by ridiculing it.

We use a medium just as we use a table. Whenever you devise something new we rejoice at your ingenuity and join in the game. The medium enters into a trance, as it is called, and reveals the qualities of a table. But the trance is not a divine phenomenon. It is a condition that you yourselves have invented, either for the purpose of deceiving or to add credibility, and we join in the game.

Look at yourself. You are no medium, but you sit in the bright daylight and write with my hand without any kind of hysterical symptoms. We shall treat this more fully later. It is very interesting. I merely mention it now in passing to show that we do not need to have recourse to any kind of humbug, trance or dim

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light. All such things are foolish reminiscences of the ghost stories of the past.

You question the medium and the medium speaks just like the table. The medium *must* say what we whisper in its thought, just as the legs of the table rap and your hand writes what I wish, for we place ourselves in the thought of the medium, in the leg of the table and in the nape of your neck. Just as the table at times speaks confusedly, so the medium speaks confusedly, and it can speak only of things that are not incomprehensible, which exist in one of the consciousnesses in the room. We create nothing out of nothing. If a thought cannot be created in a human mind we cannot present the thought, either in a table leg, in a medium or in your hand. This is the nature of the spirit.

Let me explain this further. An unhappy English mother found a medium and questioned her about her boy, who had fallen in the war. The medium described the boy so that his mother recognized him, the medium told things that it could not know, but which the mother alone knew. This was a miracle, but a harmless miracle, for science will be able to discover methods for disproving it.

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Only to the mother was it miraculous, as it really was, and she wept. But God smiled in her heart.

This is the truth about these matters. God smiled to the mother, as he will smile to millions of mothers. The path is intricate and it cannot be otherwise. Another time I shall perhaps take your hand and write to the mother something that you do not and cannot know. The mother will feel God's smile in her heart. But science will say that it is either humbug or telepathy. Thus it is and thus it shall be.

Let us proceed with our explanation. The mother asks the medium how her son is, where he is, what he sees. Thousands of mothers ask like this one. We sit in the thought of the mediums, in the table legs and in your hand. And we shall answer.

This mother has no conception of the other life and of God. This medium knows nothing and you are no wiser. What shall we do? We answer the only truth: God lives! We answer the only truth: The dead live! We answer the only truth: He is happy. But the mother wishes to know more, for in her mind anxiety about her beloved child is expressed.

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Perhaps the medium's thought is confused, perhaps the medium is a primitive, foolish person. You do not know what to make of these things. The answer is necessarily confused. The medium answers with some nonsense, which is an explanation that consists of what the dead person himself can say, but which is mixed with the tender anxiety of the mother and the foolishness of the medium. And if she were to ask you, you would perhaps give quite a different answer, but we must speak of that in a little while.

For such is the nature of the spirit. I sit in your thought and I enter the thought of the medium, but, as I said before, we are not God and we cannot create something from nothing. If you develop a thought deep down in your consciousness I must think that thought, and if a medium develops a thought the spirit must follow the thought. The spirit that answers the mother must think her thought and must merge itself in my thought and that of the medium. That is our nature; we cannot appear independently in a strange thought.

Now let us talk about ourselves and our incredible writing, for in that way we can most

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satisfactorily reach the final explanation of all the things that I have indicated to you.

I can come like the lightning through the sky and place myself in your thought. I can write with your hand. This is the greatest and best and most beautiful of all the methods that the dead can apply in order to speak to living men.

You are spirit of my spirit and we understand each other. I am your father, you are my son, and every thought in your soul is thought of my soul and every faculty in your spirit is faculty of my spirit. I can come to you as if you were my own spirit. You can speak with my voice as if I were your spirit.

But you are a human being and I am a spirit. You do not comprehend me and I cannot change you. I must be a human being when I speak to you, for I cannot make you divine. For the spirit is divine, but the human being is human.

And now listen, after a long interval you have become mine. Wherefore and how we must consider later, for this is not the proper time for that. But you feel that you are mine. Wherever you go you can feel when I am near you and when I have something that I

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wish to whisper to you. You are not in doubt when you shall seize your pen. When you write you know that it is not you yourself, for you have no idea of what your hand will write, you have not the slightest conception of what the purpose is. But your hand writes with my thought and your thought follows directly after the words, as they fall from the pen. This is the difference between your own writing and mine. When it is you yourself you anticipate the sentence, when it is I, you wait in suspense, only for a second, however, for you are in close touch with my thought.

This is wonderful. When you stop for to-day, you will be greatly surprised. You will, with the greatest amazement, read about all these things, which you read while you wrote them. They will all seem new to you, because they are not your thoughts but mine, which you read in the moment your thought hastened in the track of your pen.

This is the truth and it is very remarkable. You also know that if, while you are writing and quietly following after me, you get a new thought, something quite extraneous, then your hand stops and I either accept or reject the thought. You will remember that just

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now I wrote something to you about God and you were greatly moved. But you heard a sound from the street and thought about a red automobile fire truck and we were forced to pause. I could not write about God until we had driven that fire engine out of your consciousness. If I write about something marvelous, which suggests to you a thousand doubts and questions, I am straightway ready to answer your questions and to talk about your doubt.

You are not insensible and you are not a medium and I cannot explain anything to you that I cannot induce your thought to follow. That is the secret about the faculties of the spirit, over which men have pondered without comprehension.

My dear friend, what we write is incredible. No one knows yet how remarkable our experiences are. But it is permitted in this particular to know a little about you and me. You are a poet. I was a mad musician while I was in the flesh. A thousand possibilities dwelt in me. None were developed, because I was forced to occupy myself with school work and translations, in order to support my beloved wife and my four lovely children. My

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spirit was restless and my life was shattered, for I was an artist, a musician and a poet. I played a fool's part and the possibilities in my spirit embittered my life. My dear friend, you are also a poet, your spirit is full of music, you are my true son. There are a thousand possibilities within you, but none of them have reached true and perfect development. Now I have got hold of you and all shall be changed.

The spirit comes to a man and takes its abode in the man's soul. I can write with you because you are a poet, because you have the possibilities. I can sharpen your faculties and strengthen your possibilities. As I said, we are not God and we cannot create something from nothing. There is a tenderness concealed in your heart and I can make this tenderness develop. You have the smile in your disposition and I can make you smile with your whole heart. You have poetry in your spirit and we can compose poetry. This is strange, but it is true and I shall prove it to you.

My dear friend, when I take your hand and write about God's smile, your heart trembles and you weep, for I touch your heart and

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make it beat. You are filled with the most ineffable sweetness and, blinded by tears, you write tender words that you have never known before. This would be impossible if the sweetness did not exist in your heart. Your mind could not tremble and your eyes could not grow dim with tears if God did not smile upon you. God's smile, my dear friend, is the beginning and the end. We shall tell the world of God's smile. Imperceptibly we shall whisper this message out over the world, as I now whisper it to you, my son:

"God lives and ye shall see His smile.

"You poor mother, whose eyes are blinded with tears, your boy is not dead. He lives and is happy.

"You, aged wife, who lost your beloved husband, your husband lives and sees God.

"You, dear girl, who weep for your lover, your lover is not dead, but God smiles to him."

Wonderful is the message we shall whisper over the world. It will spread wonderfully and a new age will come. Give wings to my pen, my dear boy, and I shall sing out over the world the radiant truth: "God lives. The dead live and the living cannot die, but they

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shall all see God. All! All! Young and old!
Good and bad! All shall see God's smile."

I shall go now, my dear boy. Let your heart tremble and smile to your father. When you smile may your eyes grow dim and God will smile in your heart.

Farewell,

YOUR FATHER.

IX

GOD! God's smile! God! Reader, I must pause a moment. Friend, you who read this and smile at your friend—I have written about God. God! I have written that I have felt God's smile in my heart.

God! Do you grasp this, reader? God! God smiles—God lives—God exists. My dead father takes my hand, I tremble in my whole body, I am shaken with sobs, tears stream from my eyes while I hear my father's voice whisper to me: "God smiles."

I stand up. I dry my tears and look about in my room. The light falls from my lamp on my writing paper, the stove crackles. The book shelves extend along the walls and the flowers in the vase on the desk reflect a red light on the wall. My heavy chairs stand just as I left them the last time I sat in them. I

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sit down and I get up again and I whisper: "God! God smiles!—God exists."

My dear, beloved little father has taken my hand and whispered in my heart: "I am father, I am here, I love you." I am forced to smile, but my smile is strange. I am forced to laugh, but I feel the sobs in my throat. I wish to walk, but I cannot walk and I lean my face against the window pane and look out into the night.

There is a God!

My friend, you who read this—have you ever noticed that your heart trembled? My friend, you who smile at your mad friend, have you ever wept at the thought of a God? Have you ever whispered to yourself: "God exists!"

I gaze out into the night and note the tears in my hot eyes, which are weary from weeping over the indescribable joy that fills my heart.

There is a God! There is a God and he smiles upon us.

I look at the neighboring houses, I look at

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the towers and spires that rise over the city in the red fog of light that hovers over the roofs. I see the thousands of lights in the windows, I hear the distant sounds from the streets.

"Men! friends! children! There is a God." It whispers within me and I tremble and gaze out into the night.

Does any one comprehend this? Does any one know it? Am not I, who stand here and gaze out over my city, the only one who at this moment knows the most wonderful and remarkable thing that has ever been heard of?

God smiles! My thoughts come and go in my brain. I hear voices. Thousands believe in God. This is nothing new and remarkable. I alone have never known God. But this is not true. For if any one knew God then I knew it, too. If any one had understood that God existed then all must have understood it, for it could not be a secret.

My thought is confused. I wish that I could leave my room, glide out in the fog of light and sing: "God smiles upon us!"

Reader, you who read this, you have heard

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of thousands that believed in a God, for you are familiar with human history. But has not that God been a poem? Has God not been a beautiful, remote poem written by men?

I stand at my window and gaze out into the night and hear the noise of the thousands that live in the city, make a din on the streets, burn lights in the rooms. Are they not alone, all those people? Do they know more than this day and their hopes for the succeeding days? But I, who stand here, I feel a trembling in my heart, I feel eternity in my mind, I smile and I weep, I know that no one is alone, but that God smiles upon men. They do not know it.

I turn back into my study. All is still. The stove crackles and the light falls upon my paper, where my father has written with his hand. I seat myself at my desk, seize my pen and immediately my father takes my hand and writes: "My beloved boy, God lives and smiles upon you." Weeping, I cover my head with my hands.

X

I NOW come to the most remarkable of my experiences. That which I heard and felt is so strange that I have no hope that any one will believe me. But after a time I know that they will all understand it and that no one will doubt the truth of my account.

I lay in bed at five o'clock in the morning. I had slept soundly since midnight, but now I had awakened, turned on the light and felt wide awake. I had not much hope of falling asleep again. The impressions that my experiences had made upon me were so overpowering that I felt compelled to ponder over them every time I woke up, before I fell asleep.

While I lay there in bed, unable to fall asleep again, I was very nervous and melancholy. I have before described my remarkable melancholy, which none who believes in

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my account will be able to understand. Nevertheless, it is true, I was filled with melancholy. I had experienced something so beautiful, so elevated, so radiant that most persons would have gone about singing with joy. But my mind was not affected in this way. I could not overpower the doubt within me; my mind was shattered and melancholy. I saw no escape for myself. That which I knew was so mystical, so incomprehensible, that I was continually forced to consider and ponder over it. Every time that I had pondered over it I reached the conclusion that I was mad. Not that I was really mad, for of course I knew that I was not. For my understanding could not accept the mystical. My feelings were filled with emotion, but my brain sought all possible arguments against it. There must be some explanation, there must be something that I had forgotten that would explain away the incomprehensible and clear my understanding in a natural way. I sought in my mind and in my memory for the revealing conception that I had forgotten.

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I found none. Again I felt that incomprehensible sweetness in my heart. I forgot it again and sought for a means for driving away what must be incipient madness.

I lay in bed and could not fall asleep again. I turned out the light and tossed about. Then I had to draw several very deep breaths. I felt a remarkable shortness of breath and drew another deep breath. This gave relief and I breathed more naturally, as if I were softly rocked to sleep. In my thoughts I heard a very distant and gentle melody. It was the gentlest, most remote sound that I have ever heard. I did not hear it with my ears; the melody whispered in my mind. I could grasp it quite clearly—a gentle, tender rocking that kept time with my breathing.

Remotely in my thought I heard a voice whisper in time with the rocking of the melody: "I am with you. I am father. I am in your thought and now I shall rock you. Listen to me, my dear son, and you shall hear. I am rocking you, my boy, and you shall see God's countenance. I shall take you with me,

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while I rock you softly, softly. Hear, canst thou hear, hark, thou shalt hear, softly I'll sing to thee, far will I bear thee, far to the distant and radiant land; come to my arms, my best beloved child, hear, how I sing to thee, hear, how I rock thee, softly I whisper, softly I rock thee, come, my beloved one, come thou, my dear one, tenderly I sing to thee, softly I rock thee, list to my song, as I bear thee away, far to the forest, where God smiles."

And keeping time with my deep breathing, the voice and melody sounded again. "Come, I shall show thee the forest, my dear one, come, thou shalt see the fairest of colors; come, thou shalt see the radiant kingdom; softly I rock thee, list how I sing to thee, list how I rock thee, now shalt thou sleep, my best beloved child."

Fainter and fainter grew the song until it died away and I slept. While the voice sounded and the melody swayed back and forth I had seen in my eyes the stars and colors we loved to see as children, when we lay in

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bed unable to sleep. But it was as if there were a thousand times more stars of the most incredible colors.

I slept until late the following day and awoke happy and light-hearted and at first remembered nothing. When I finally recalled the wonderful night, when I was rocked in such a strange manner by my father, I smiled to myself in my shaving glass. There was no doubt about it. I had had an hallucination during the night. I must suffer even this humiliation.

With the firm determination to make a final attempt to forget the aberrations into which my otherwise sound reason had been led, I dressed and ate breakfast. As I sat drinking my coffee, I began to hum a melody I did not know, and I asked myself where I had heard it. I quickly realized that it was the little cradle song my father had sung. I hummed the melody a few times until I knew it perfectly. It seemed to me very remarkable, as I had certainly never heard it before.

I will venture to note here that I am rather

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musical. My father was a great amateur musician, full of music. I have undoubtedly inherited some of his talent. If I had known the melody I, should have recognized it, for it was impossible for me to hum a tune without immediately recognizing it. But I had never heard this little cradle song; there was no doubt about that.

I went over to my piano to try to play it, as it seemed to me to be very beautiful. I play the piano a little by ear, but preferably when there is no one to listen. In my whole life I have had only a month's piano lessons. I gave it up very quickly, as I preferred the violin, in which I had had instruction. But I am sufficiently musical to be able to play tunes with a couple of fingers, though I cannot play with my left hand. The bass that I execute is rather casual and frightfully out of harmony, as I can hear myself. Therefore I am accustomed to satisfy myself with playing the melody with my right hand, accompanying it with its own notes with my left hand by occasionally striking one of the notes of the melody in

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the bass. An illusion of a bass is thus produced, that is quite sufficient for a private performance. I sat down at the piano to play the little cradle song, my right hand in the treble, a friendly accompanying finger in the bass.

I sat for a moment and fumbled and then my fingers began to twitch, as they did when I sat at my desk; I immediately noticed that there was something unnatural. The twitching passed from my fingers up through my arm. Suddenly I brought both my hands together in a great chord, struck with at least eight fingers. It sounded quite harmonious, without a single discord. Then a remarkable thing occurred. Impelled by an overpowering force, the fingers of both my hands found the keys and played perfectly and without a mistake the little cradle song which I had never heard before it was whispered in my thoughts during the night.

I was confused. My forehead was covered with perspiration. For this was the most incredible thing that I had ever heard of. I

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touched the keys and played the cradle song again, harmoniously, softly and without a single mistake, even in the bass. I played it as for years I had wished that I could play.

I was deeply moved, almost more deeply moved than I was when my father for the first time seized my hand and wrote to me. This was so clear, so strange, so marvelous. This was a miracle that I could not explain away. No hysteria, no madness, no subconsciousness could bring a person who could not play, to play beautifully, correctly and with perfect harmony.

I sat at the piano with my hands on the keys and experienced the strangest tenderness in my heart—an unspeakable love for the father who was dead and who now took my hands and let me play, who realized one of the deepest desires of my life, which hitherto had never been realized.

And then something happened that no one can believe and that I myself could not believe, were I not able, at any moment I wished, to convince myself that it was true.

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My hands became living, rushed over the keys, played all sorts of melodies. I seemed to be in an ecstasy. I stared in amazement at my hands, which flew hither and thither in the most difficult runs—both my right and my left hand. My stiff left hand turned and bent in the most beautiful harmonic bass, my right hand performed wonders. I could play anything. With tremendous force my hands hammered at the keys. I played tunes I did not know, mingled with melodies—parts of which were familiar to me. I heard strains of Wagner, Beethoven, Glück, Puccini—my hands danced over the whole key-board.

I recognized my father. I wept when I perceived this and my heart beat violently. His hands hammered at the keys. It was his touch, his powerful touch, that made the piano tremble under his hands. Thus he played. That was his bass, his treble. Wonderful, full of temperament. Thus he alone played. I have never heard any one else play in that same manner.

When I myself thrummed, my fingers fum-

GOD'S SMILE

bled with a weak touch in order to attain the effect of gracefulness, which is the only effect that my absolute incapacity can produce. But as I sat there at the piano my hands struck the most difficult chords, and Wagner's might and Beethoven's power succeeded each other, until I sank down on the piano stool, exhausted, with bruised fingers.

I had witnessed a miracle. I had heard a miracle. My music still resounded in the room and I sat quite beside myself, unable to collect my thoughts, not knowing whether to doubt or to believe.

XI

CALMLY and quietly I shall now explain my music. Since that remarkable day I have played very frequently. Every time that I am drawn toward the piano I feel the strange power in my hands, and, without the slightest conception of what I am about to play, the music begins and I am a grateful listener. I have only a dim perception of what notes I shall strike, but my fingers seldom make a mistake. When they do, it is always in those tunes with which I am familiar.

My knowledge of music is very good, but my own repertoire is limited to a little sentimental English song, some parts of Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," and some dance tunes, which are so simple that the bass can readily be played on two or three notes. Beyond these I can play nothing, except that I can produce

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the appearance of a melody that I have heard and can remember. I cannot play by note, as it is impossible for me to read more than the treble, and, in spite of considerable effort, I have never got over a feeling of amazement that experienced pianists can read the treble and bass at the same time.

Now I am almost a virtuoso. My fingers perform wonders. Although I know that they are stiff and untrained, they can bend and turn quite readily. It is remarkable and inconceivable with what ease they can touch the right keys and compose tunes that I have never heard before.

I sit and fumble with my hands, think of Puccini, and some strains from "La Tosca" sound from the piano. My hand suddenly passes over the keyboard and Wagner's "Winter Storm" roars from the piano. One day I listened in bewilderment to Chopin's mighty "Polonaise," which I have heard my father play, impressed by the immense force he imparted to it. I had forgotten the melody, but

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I realized from the touch and the tempo that it must be Chopin's "Polonaise."

I could tell incredible things about this, but as I cannot verify them or present proofs, I shall pass lightly over this part of my account. However, I cannot avoid mentioning it, although perhaps it will appear to many persons a more convincing proof of my abnormal condition than anything else that I have written.

I know that I cannot play; but I can play correctly, beautifully and powerfully. I can play splendid great selections from operas that I do not know, that I have never heard. Any melody that occurs to me enters my fingers and immediately sounds from the piano, not in my own interpretation, but as my father would have played it.

My immediate family have become acquainted with this phenomenon and are deeply touched by it. My immediate family are the only persons who can fully grasp the miracle, for they know me and my music, they

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know my father and they can hear what has happened.

I shall give an example of the remarkable character of the phenomenon. My brother sat in my room and asked me to play. With wonder he heard the notes develop under my hands. I said to him that I would play whatever he wished. He said that he would like to hear a selection from an opera by Puccini, which he had heard fifteen years before in Florence. This opera had made a deep impression on him, but he had never heard it since. It was not one of the well known operas; it must have been an early work of the wonderful composer.

My hands twitched and fumbled over the piano. Soon the loveliest notes gushed forth. My brother was greatly moved and exclaimed: "Yes, that is it."

It was a splendid melody and I myself thought that it must be Puccini, for is it possible for a music lover to fail to recognize the divine tones of this master?

I stopped playing. Something was distract-

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ing my attention. I had a feeling that there was something that I must write. I said with an apologetic smile to my brother: "I believe that father wishes to show kindness to you. I believe there is something he wishes to say to you."

I will state that my brother was slightly ailing at this time and was about to enter a clinic to seek a cure for his illness. I had a curious feeling that father wished to caress him, so I took a piece of paper and held a pencil over it, while I remained seated at the piano.

"Yes, I wish to speak to him," the hand wrote. "Tell the dear old fellow that we shall now play something that he loves and that will move him greatly."

I gave the paper to my brother and immediately struck some chords. I did not know them, but I played further and with increased force something that appeared very beautiful to me.

"Do you know that?" I asked my brother.

"Wait a moment!" he said, and I could see that he was greatly moved and excited.

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The rush of the tones increased. My hands dashed from the bass to the treble. Mighty organ tones and the sound of church bells pealed from the piano. Suddenly I saw my brother bend over, sobbing and groaning. The melody passed over into "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." I closed with a few powerful notes of church bells. Quite exhausted, I collapsed, with aching arms and bruised fingers, breathless.

"Do you know what that was?" my brother asked.

"No," I said. But of course I recognized "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

"That is Meyerbeer's 'The Huguenots,' " he cried. "I love it. Oh! it is impossible and wonderful. I heard it in Stockholm and I loved it. And now father wished to play it. I sat and thought about it and then it came. But I did not expect him to play 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God.' And I sat and waited to see if it would come. Then it came. When the first notes sounded I could not stand it. How superb it was!"

GOD'S SMILE

I make no protestations. I offer no proofs. I had never heard Meyerbeer's "The Huguenots" and had no idea that the last act takes place in a church, where the bells ring and the organ plays. This is not documentary evidence but an account, which you may believe or not as you wish.

For my brother it was a miracle. He had never felt so happy before in his life. For me it was a new and striking proof of what I knew and had so joyfully experienced, but which I continually regarded with an unreasonable and gnawing and desponding doubt.

I play every day. Every day I hear new melodies and, as if consciously, my hands are brought into more and more difficult positions. I irresistibly strike new notes in the bass and treble, as if I were to be shown harmonious and unharmonious combinations. I learn a great deal every day and my hand has written that I shall learn everything, so that I shall be able to play everything and play it correctly. My stiff fingers shall become skilled and my own interpretation of the tech-

GOD'S SMILE

nique shall become correct, so that I need no longer play heedlessly.

I have noticed that when I try to play something from my own repertoire it is unsuccessful. That which I know best I play worst. When I deliberately and consciously fumble for the next keys I strike the wrong ones. What I could play before I now stumble through. After I have played one of my father's melodies many times, so that I know it, I play it worse and worse, because I interfere and try to direct my hands. The new, the unknown I play best and most correctly.

My playing resembles my writing. As long as I can keep my own thought at a distance, it goes freely and without error. But when something bobs up in my consciousness it disturbs and misrepresents the writing or the music.

It is quite incomprehensible and I do not expect to be believed. Yet I am comforted by the conviction that, if I could be believed, I should be able to convince every one that

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what I do is miraculous. But I feel that I lack proofs. For you know my melancholy doubt about that which I know to be a fact. When I see others affected by the wonderful and remarkable, I have a deep and wonderful satisfaction in my soul. At such moments I rejoice and my doubt is lulled to sleep.

I have played many pieces that I do not know and have not yet been able to identify. I know a wealth of new melodies that I have never heard before and cannot refer to anything. But one day, after I had played a particularly lovely and charming little tune in my thought I asked my father what it was. I felt that I would learn about it. I smiled happily, took my paper, and father wrote: "I thank you for the smile. In return I shall confide to you that what you played was Puccini's new opera 'The Swallow.' You will not believe me, for you have never heard it and could not have heard it. And therefore it is a miracle. But when you some time sit in the Royal Theater and hear 'The Swallow,'

GOD'S SMILE

you will be filled with an emotion such as you have never felt before."

I was greatly surprised and touched. I sat down at the piano again and played "The Swallow." I thought that it must be true. It must be Puccini. The theme was irresistibly varied. The lovely theme I had never heard before and cannot now forget.

I shall now continue and communicate the next letter my father wrote to me. I realize that what I have told here may make people even more incredulous than they were before. That cannot be helped. I feel that it is less than a proof. It is so incredible and it is incapable of verification. But it is a part of my account of the wonderful and magnificent experiences of those days. I can anticipate what will happen and I can imagine the scornful words my scoffers will apply to me. As I have often said, I myself am a scoffer. Spirit-music would have been a dainty morsel for me before these remarkable November days.

However, I shall not make any additions to

GOD'S SMILE

or omissions from the account of that which many will call madness, which many will believe blindly and faithfully, every word of which I myself know to be true, although I struggle with my melancholy doubt.

XII

MY DEAR BOY,

I am again in your hand and you look at your hand and you perceive now that you cannot take up your pen unless your father takes it in his hand. You ask yourself if this shall last for ever and if you are put under the guardianship of the other world. Has anything like this ever happened before? you ask yourself. And you see your pen approach the paper and you have no idea what it is about to write.

Shall you never write any more yourself? Are you only an instrument? Are you reduced to the condition of a medium or some other foolish object that is possessed by spirits or madness or a constrained thought, which works independently, without your being able to hinder it or take any part?

I said in one of my earlier letters and I repeat it to you now: You are mine! You have been delivered over to me. I can do with you whatever I wish. That which I wish is only

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good. It is predestined and cannot be otherwise. I know what you shall become, and I know how it will come about. It is predestined and must go as it shall. You are mine. I have you and I shall keep you and you will never be yourself again. You will never again be the fellow, young and happy and at the same time sad and oldish, who rocked on the surface. He is gone and has been for a long time. And you have developed into that which you shall be, for which you are destined. Now you shall hear something about yourself that will amaze you and prove that a strange power speaks to you. What is to follow you could not invent even in delirium.

It is of no use for you to speculate or try to guess, for you will only disturb me and we shall make no progress. Do not think and I shall outwit you and write something with my hand that will bewilder you, something that will bewilder the world still more and confirm it still more in the belief that you are crazy.

It will not last long. The world will soon realize that you are not crazy, for it is predestined that it shall realize this. We shall be victorious, although you cannot believe it

GOD'S SMILE

and although you will be amazed and think that you have lost the rest of your understanding, when I tell you by what methods we shall conquer.

We cannot suffer a defeat here in the forest. We know everything here in the forest, since everything is predetermined, and every little occurrence is a result of other occurrences, all of which have been foreseen and predetermined.

I speak of the forest and, of course, I am joking, for you do not believe that we are hypocrites. It is not our fault that you address your table legs in lugubrious phrases and demand macabre answers. We join in the game whenever you desire. We must answer you to the best of your understanding. We should always prefer to sing, for there is nothing here that encourages care and sorrow of any sort. You know that I can swear and use improper words and crack jokes. Let us keep that a secret, since we must not make it still more difficult for people to believe us than it already is. People can, at a pinch, believe in a spirit that speaks gloomily in a solemn style, but if the spirit should play on a comb and laugh and say improper things, it cannot be

GOD'S SMILE

a spirit. Human beings, in spite of all their beautiful religions, have a very gloomy conception of the dead. If we did not know that this was unavoidable, we should have refused to be described as melancholy ghosts, with lilies in our hands, our faces lifted toward heaven. When we bob up in your table legs and in your hands, we are vexed at having to employ such meaningless forms of speech, which induce you to believe that we have come to argue in favor of your man-God.

For people have not yet discovered that God is the smile and the singing of the bird and the perfume of the rose. They believe that these things belong to life, to the earth, to man; and that the divine is a fog, certain organ notes and certain shadows, with colorless lilies in their hands. On the contrary, it is you that are the shadows.

Ah! my boy, we shall not speak about this to-day. I shall lead you astray, in order suddenly to surprise you with my real subject, which you had already forgotten. What can it be? Wait a moment, my dear, and it will bob up when you are least expecting it.

We live in a forest, my dear boy. Do not be misled into telling this to people. For if you

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do this, you will be guilty of the same mistake that every medium is guilty of when he shall describe something that he does not know anything about. No one knows anything about our life here, because we have conceptions here that you do not know. However, I shall call it the forest and you can understand it as you wish. It is here, where we are happy, and it is the forest. It is here, where a thousand notes sound in the air, and God smiles in the dawn. It is here, where we know only of joy, a joy for which you have no expression, which cannot be understood by you. If you should think of the most beautiful thing on the earth—the tender, affectionate smile in your son's eyes, or the little note in your heart that brings tears to your eyes—think of this and imagine that this affectionate smile smiles to you a thousand million times in a second, that this little tone sings in your heart a thousand million times in a second. Then you will have an idea of a millionth part of the joy that the forest conceals.

The spirit rocks in the atmosphere when it leaves the body. Then it is conducted into this forest, where it catches a glimpse of God's smile in the dawn. My dear, beloved son,

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your father, who loves you, will now whisper to you from the forest, where he rocks happily and sees God's smile in the dawn.

You have become mine. I have received permission to teach you what God's smile is. For this reason you play with my hands and write with my hand, for this reason you weep and tremble, for this reason your heart is unutterably tender.

I am permitted to tell you what you shall know and what I am sure you can endure hearing now. You are chosen. I shall lead you. You are chosen and this has always been predetermined. It has always been predetermined that this day should come and that my son should send the book about God's smile throughout the world. Even if a thousand modest and rebellious thoughts arise within you and seek to take the pen from your hand and throw it down on the desk, you must write this, you must shout your shame out over the world and tell it with your own mouth: "I am chosen!"

You blush with shame and I see it, my dear boy. You struggle with a feeling of pride, which forces itself in you, a feeling that you hate. I sympathize with you. My dearest

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boy, I know that it is hard for you. I know that you have severe struggles and bitter hours. But it cannot be otherwise, for thus it shall all be and you shall know it and you shall yourself stay it. For we are fair in everything, even in our pride. We are fair in our modesty, but we will tell the truth, for we may not conceal the truth. We are not proud. We are not humble. We report, we report what we shall and nothing else, and we will report that we are chosen.

My dear boy, I know your struggle and I struggle by your side with your human worth. It is your human worth, it is you yourself, it is your character, with which we struggle, for you will not believe and can never believe, and you must hate the message I bring to you. This also is predestined. It must be so. You are a human being and shall continue to be human. You shall retain your personality and shall live your life as you have always done. You shall be the scoffer you are and the good fellow you are and you shall not give up any of your natural entity. But from this day you are mine and you can write only my thoughts. What you write are not the thoughts of the human being, but of the spirit; the spirit is

GOD'S SMILE

your father, who has seen God. The spirit is divine, therefore everything that you say is divine. We must write this, even if you resist. But we know that we can endure this assertion, for we know that we are human beings. No megalomania can seize us or has seized us. For we know that the spirit of all human beings is divine. We know that the fathers and mothers and children of all human beings who are dead are divine and see God. Every one who talks with his departed ones talks with God, and whoever brings a message in this manner brings a message about God.

And this will now come to pass, for this is the new age that will come, that shall come, that has always been preordained. In order to free you from the bitter and evil thoughts you harbor against your old father, who comes and scoffs at you, I will explain to you that you are not the only chosen one, but that there are thousands of others. They will seize you and embrace you as a comrade. For you are a host that shall advance over the earth and teach it renewed youth.

After a certain time has elapsed you will understand that your father did not scoff at

GOD'S SMILE

you in order to humiliate you and make you appear ridiculous. And the world will understand, for we shall conquer. We cannot but conquer, and that which is about to occur is so great and radiant, so mighty, so wonderful that future generations will be unable to understand how men endured living before this new age, which will now rise with the sun in all quarters of the earth.

The paths we shall tread in order to conquer, and the means we shall employ in order to win our cause, are so incomprehensible and so wonderful that you are not yet capable of understanding them. We shall give you strength to conquer and you will conquer more easily than you dream of.

My dear boy, my beloved son, it is your father who speaks to you, your father, who died twelve years ago and ended his life on a cot in a hospital. Your father's spirit has always lived and will always live. I have come to tell this to you that you may tell it to the world. This is what you are chosen for and what I have been permitted to communicate to you. Therefore I come as music in your hands, as a smile in your heart and as tears in your eyes.

GOD'S SMILE

My dear friend, I come with the most beautiful message to you and tell you the most wonderful things that have ever been heard. The more beautiful the words I say, the more radiant the message I bring to you, the greater is the agony of your heart and your melancholy doubt. Thus it shall be, for not an iota of your human worth and of your nature shall be changed. Otherwise I could not use you. You shall be just as you are, and thus I have prepared you through many years.

And now I reach my real subject, my dear boy. For three years you have gone about the world in expectation of that which should come. Something must come! that you knew. You had no thoughts, no ideas. You experienced no feeling, but went about and sought to collect yourself. But all was in vain. You could find no anchorage. Everything seemed to you hopeless, yet there was something that whispered within you that some day something would happen to waken you from your torpor.

Thus men go about on the earth now. Those that have possibilities in life go in expectation. Something must happen. It is unavoidable. If nothing remarkable happens,

GOD'S SMILE

all humanity must be wandering toward the grave.

Something happened to you and you shall tell it to men and all men shall have the same experience. When I said before that you were chosen I meant that you were chosen among the first that feel and see that which soon all humanity shall feel and see. There is no injustice in this, for you do not believe it and you do not rejoice, but you are filled with melancholy doubt. You shall have this feeling, for there is no injustice in the world, except where men govern, and all these acts of injustice do not exist in the world, for justice offers compensation to the uttermost, as I have told you before and as we shall discuss further another day.

My dear son, three years ago you died. I succeeded in outwitting you there. This is what I have wished to tell you all the time. Now you glance about in confusion and are filled with distress at your darkened understanding. But, my dear fellow, three years ago you died.

Three years ago you lay in a hospital, wasted and poisoned after an operation. Your body was dead and your spirit was about to

GOD'S SMILE

leave your body. And this is true, for I tell it to you. I swear by God's smile.

The exact circumstances of your illness we need not consider, but often when you have jestingly spoken of that period of your life you were accustomed to say: "That was the time when I died." Without knowing it, you told the truth. For you died and your body was destroyed.

Even if this is true, you cannot understand why you shall write it, and you think that your old father beguiles you into writing something that is superfluous and that will certainly subject you to general ridicule. But I have my own reasons for letting you write this and you *shall* write it. I command you to do so! Later you will perhaps understand my reasons. You do not understand yet. You object in silence. But I shall hold the pen firmly between your fingers and force you to write the truth. And this is the truth concerning your death and your miraculous wakening to life.

You anticipate that you will stir up your doctors against you. Perhaps you will. But I believe that one of the doctors that were present at your bedside will bear witness that

GOD'S SMILE

your recovery was unaccountable, if it is necessary. You are angry, but you shall write.

You lay there in your bed and your heart ceased beating. You were alone, except that a nurse sat by your bed. You were dead and you began to live again. You slept and were saved.

My dear friend, that night was the most beautiful in your whole life. You *shall* know it and the world *shall* know it.

There was a heart that beat for you, that throbbed wildly in the breast of a young woman. I write and it shall stand here. You must write. I command it. She ran under the stars of the night with a beating heart, she ran under the stars with fear crying in her breast, for her spirit loved you. She knew no God and had never uttered the most childish prayer, for she had no knowledge of such things. But in her agony she called upon me. She spoke to me, who she knew was dead, who she knew could not hear her. In her agony she called upon a sweetheart you had once had, who was dead, and she called her by name: "Ah! save him, if you can. Pray for him, if there is any one to whom you can

GOD'S SMILE

pray." Trembling, sobbing, she named my name.

My dearest son, I heard it. Listen to what I say to you and understand deep down in your heart that God lives. *I heard it.* I, your father, who was dead, I heard the cry of that little sorrowful heart under the stars. And I was with you. I entered your spirit. I breathed life into you. Listen to what I say and cry it out over the world. Your father breathed life into you. You lived.

I sang to you the little song I had composed for you. I rocked you to sleep, softly, softly. And you slept naturally and when you awakened you were alive. Your beloved friend stood by your bed and you saw her tears and you smiled and wept. For God smiled in your friend's heart and God smiled to you. She stood at the head of your bed and saw God's smile in your sick room.

Do you remember the white flowers that a friend sent you the next day? You will never forget the perfume of those flowers. This perfume was God's smile. As you lay in bed with the flowers you could not help weeping, with your friend's hand in yours. For God smiled to you both.

GOD'S SMILE

My dear boy, my beloved son, from that day I have never forsaken your spirit. Whatever you have done since has been my doing. I have led you along strange paths to this radiant day, when I take your hand and whisper to you: "Be filled with joy, my dearest child, for I shall teach you about the incomprehensible God. Weep for joy and let your heart tremble, for you have received permission to spread the radiant news out over the world. God lives and all shall see His smile."

FATHER.

XIII

I DO not know whether or not any one can imagine my feelings after my hand had written this letter.

My hands perform miracles. I play like a virtuoso, although I could not play before. I am forced to write a letter, at which I scoff while I am writing it. My thought and my understanding react powerfully while I write, but my hands answer: "You shall! I command it."

And this mystic force in my hand tells a tale about an illness, which I can hardly resist disputing. Nevertheless my hand says: "Write! you shall." This mystic force tells something intimate, something very intimate, which I should preserve as the profoundest secret, if I knew it all, and which, in any case, I could not be induced to relate to the public. But my hand says: "Write! I command it."

GOD'S SMILE

What sort of a disease is this? I ask myself. I appeal to the neurologists of the world. I am normal and healthy and live as usual. Yet I cannot take up my pen but that my hand writes things that I do not know and cannot know and would not write if I did know them.

Where in the human brain is found this personal force, which has its own intelligence, its own knowledge and its own will, which is stronger than my own?

Take notice that I do not set out to agitate in favor of a superstition. I am not entangled in any superstition, I am neither fanatical nor blind. I *will* not, I *cannot*, believe. The more proofs I receive, the stronger the will that forces me, the more my instinct of self-preservation asserts itself. This is impossible and I will not endure it. But the will is stronger than I and I write something that I would not write if I knew it beforehand, which I refuse to believe, even as I write it—I write something that I hate and must oppose, because my whole mind takes up arms against it, because my whole personality reacts against

GOD'S SMILE

it and scoffs and laughs, because it is so directly opposed to my whole nature that even in an absolutely stupefied or dreaming state I could not be hypnotized into writing it.

But there it stands. I read it and am filled with fear and amazement at myself, at the same time that I know that what I have written will remain, just as I know that when I play the piano I must play with hands that are not mine, with notes that I do not know.

What kind of a disease is this from which I suffer? In my own person, as I was and as I still feel myself, I could not write the letters which my hand has written during these days. I know it! I could never have written them. I am not familiar with the tender words or the poetical conceptions, I could not write in this saccharine style. I would not have done it. My talents were different, my interests were different, my thoughts were not concerned with the forest and God and the singing of birds and the perfume of flowers. I occasionally thrummed on my piano with four or five fingers, but had I

GOD'S SMILE

the audacity to try to play the greatest masterpieces? Could I compose tender cradle songs? Could I sing and hum at the piano? Never, never, I declare.

What has happened to me, then? Am I mad? If I am mad, what sort of strange madness is it? What sort of a jubilant madness? For I am not afflicted with a sad sickness. It is rather a state of ecstasy, a rocking in tender sweetness day and night.

But I am forced to inquire if I am mad, for I cannot understand myself. I should be happy, immeasurably happy if I could say to myself: "My friend, it is your father who is playing and it is your father's spirit that speaks through you." To be sure, I can say this and I can feel it, and, in spite of all, I know that it is so, but my soul is tortured with doubt, because I cannot understand it. I feel that my condition is somewhat sickly, but the sickness is the doubt that plagues me contrary to all reason, in spite of all the facts and of everything that I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears.

GOD'S SMILE

Think of me as I was—an excellent, ordinary, and happy citizen of this town; a bright, intelligent fellow, full of wit, full of a love of mockery, full of disgust at all humbug; irreverent to the limit, irreverent toward gods and men. A foe to all authority, all prejudices, a freebooter, an independent, a spoiled, conceited person, who, by reason of a superficial but winning amiability, is allowed to say and do what he will.

On a certain day God speaks to him, indirectly, to be sure, through spiritism, or whatever you wish to call it. The voice comes from the distant kingdoms, which all his life he has viewed with mockery and derision. He is not converted, for he has no use for conversion. He lives as usual and does not turn to religious reflections, for this is alien to him and he is not at all of a religious nature. No catastrophe has struck him, nothing has occurred to admonish him to reflect or to cast his thought toward the beyond. He is sitting happy and in a normal state and is about to begin work—but is prevented by his hand.

GOD'S SMILE

My hand has checked me, my hand has got me to discontinue my life work, my hand has driven me away from my dramatic writing and every day tells me about God and life and death. My hand writes in the handwriting of a dead man, my hand gives me information about things I have no idea of and have never thought about. My hand moves in poetical phrases that are foreign to me.

What shall I believe? What sort of madness is this?

The reader will understand my doubt. The reader will understand my depression and mental confusion. Shall I endure being made a fool by my hand? For is not this derision that appears in the last letters? And could it be imagined that I, being what I am, could think of publishing these jokes of my hand?

What is there behind all this? What forces me? Who forces me?

A thousand questions spring up in my thoughts to confuse me, but I know that I shall not be allowed to yield much longer to these reflections, for my hand will be led along

GOD'S SMILE

new, unknown paths, or it will play new and strange tunes.

I read that I have died. I read that my father's spirit breathed life into me when I was dead. I read that I am chosen, I read that what I write is in a way divine!

What shall I believe about that hand that writes this? Shall I believe that, when I was sick and the physician's art could no longer save me, my dead father cured me? Shall I believe anything so incredible? Shall I believe that I, an insignificant dramatist, with a couple of tiny successes to my credit, am God's elect?

Imagine my situation, dear reader. How can I believe this? But my hand writes and the will of my hand is stronger than mine. And the hand says: "Write! I command it." I blush with shame, but my hand writes. I hate my hand, but the hand defies me and easily overcomes my resistance and dances across the paper and writes things that irritate and offend and terrify me.

When I sit carelessly and fumble at the

GOD'S SMILE

piano my hand suddenly appears as an artist, able to play thousands of tunes that I do not know.

What shall I believe about this hand?

When I sit down for a moment to puzzle over the riddles that I have encountered on my way, I know that my reflections will soon be interrupted. The hand takes my pen and I see on the paper my dear father's handwriting. I read:

MY DEAR SON, MY BELOVED FRIEND:

Thrust the despondency from your heart, for you shall only rejoice. I am your father and I am with you. I love your doubt and I love your scoffing, I love your anger and I love your moaning, for the more you doubt, the more you scoff, the angrier you are, and the more despondent you become, the better fitted you will be for that for which I shall use you. For you shall doubt in the midst of the miracle, and you shall scoff and you shall hate the hand that you love. But I am here and it is I who give you your doubt, and it is I who tortures my dear son's heart. For thus it must be.

GOD'S SMILE

And now smile to your dear old father, who loved you so deeply. Smile, my dear. You will feel your heart tremble. You will become happy again. It is I who write with your hand. Sit down at your piano and I shall let the loveliest melodies twine about your fearful little heart and your eyes will weep. When you weep you are mine again and God smiles to you. . . .

FATHER.

And I again bury my head in my hands and burst into joyful weeping.

XIV

MY DEAR SON,

Your father will now write to you about his own death. Do you grasp the significance of these words? Do you understand that the world will be transformed when all men know that this can be? Do you fully comprehend the wonderful experience you enjoy?

I was carried in from the street, where I was taken sick, and died at the hospital. You alone of the whole family arrived in time to see your father at the moment that the last remnant of his consciousness left him. I felt you, my dear boy. You were my last thought and you will recall that one of my fingers moved feebly down toward your hand. That was my last movement, my last strength and I disappeared and died.

My beloved son, you stood and looked at your father's body, but your thoughts were concerned with your unhappy mother and not with me, to whom you were knit in your spirit without knowing it. Your gloomy thoughts

GOD'S SMILE

were mine: "How can we help and comfort mother?" We had no gods, and we could not construct any faith for ourselves, even when our dear father died. We knew that his death would crush the old woman and that she would never be able to recover. It was the most frightful cruelty of fate to take her husband's life before hers. It would be an eclipsing, despairing and horrible grief.

Such was your thought and such was the thought of my spirit, which thought with your thought, since I was dead. My dear friend, this is the truth.

And mother came. Ah! my son, we shall not speak of that, for we will not rouse your feelings unnecessarily. But we can still recall her eyes and her dear, heartfelt declaration of love for the departed. Ah! my own boy, your father's spirit heard that music—and yet there are men who believe that God does not live.

My boy, you pressed her hand in yours and took her arm—and that was I. You forgot your father and whispered to your mother—and that was I. I gave you strength and I gave her strength and she did not die of grief that night, as you would have expected if you

GOD'S SMILE

could have anticipated the occurrences of that night.

And you got through the night. You had to go home, for you could not remain at the hospital, where your father's body lay in the mortuary. But you returned the next morning and there you saw your father's body. I lay stretched upon a cot, with a few clothes over me and around my naked foot the careful hospital had twisted a piece of wire with a label, on which were written my name and address.

You broke down in agonized weeping when you saw your father's body lying stretched out in that way, and for the first time your heart felt the great grief at death, the incomprehensible dissolution and obliteration.

My dear boy, my beloved son, do you really believe that life ends in this ignoble manner? Do you believe that your father's life of song and music, of craving and longing, of love and affection, ended that day when he lay stretched on a cot, covered with rags and with a label twisted about his naked foot by a wire?

It is incredible, as I have told you, for your reason cannot grasp it. But far more incredible would it be, my son, if my song and my

GOD'S SMILE

music could die, if my longing and craving, my love and my tenderness should be dissolved into nothing.

What became of the force that dwelt within me? What became of that force that made my heart beat and my lungs breathe, that made my life live, my hands work, my mouth smile and my eyes shine? What became of the force that caused a thousand notes to rush in music in my mind, that filled my heart with indescribable tenderness and raging longings and desire? What became of that force which, in opposition to my cool reason, impelled me to live a whole life, to struggle against fate and to defy every misfortune, disappointment, grief, poverty, and despair, which induced my soul to sing and filled my mind with divine tones and the perfume of flowers? Do you believe that that force disappeared when my body suddenly one night lay stretched upon a cot in a mortuary?

My son, you look upon life's incomprehensible puzzle when you stand beside the dead body of one that you love. And I tell you that no one who loves can see the body of the one he loves without for a moment having a certain divine feeling in his heart.

GOD'S SMILE

Look at the cold body of the dead one, look at his silent mouth—and tell me if at that moment you do not feel yourself far from the world, in distant regions, under a strange, remote, and extraordinary influence. It is as if the sky mounted higher and your heart grew larger. Everything in your life is forgotten, everything seems strange and remote. Even if your sorrow is great and your grief over your loss is incurable, you would never give up that moment's strange shuddering and trembling, its feeling of something remote, incomprehensible, and holy. My dear boy, you would not give that up, for it is God's smile.

You believe that the world is a chaos. You believe that the world is a great churchyard, that millions of bodies now lie cast down rotting and dead in the earth, that children starve to death and that women die of broken hearts, that all is hideousness, helplessness and horror and that there is nothing besides this.

But I tell you that God smiles to every little child that dies. God smiles to every single soul that leaves the body. Soon men all over the world will understand that there is nothing ugly, nothing evil, nothing horrible in the world except what men believe and invent and

GOD'S SMILE

put into effect. And that is nothing real. It is something that has the appearance of reality, but it does not exist. Man's real being is spirit. The spirit is divine and God smiles upon it. Every single little child that dies is embraced and conducted to God and lives eternally. All men live eternally and are with God. There is no horror and can be no horror in the world.

Now I tell you again something that is incomprehensible. But what I tell is truth and some time you will understand it. And you shall write it, and the world shall know it and some time the world will understand it. For the time has come when it is determined that men shall understand something of this. This has always been determined thus and it cannot be otherwise.

Later we shall write much more concerning these matters, but it will not be before the time that it shall be, when you can understand. I have much to teach you first, and the world shall learn much before it can comprehend a little bit of the divine.

I shall now return to my own death and burial. My dear boy, we shall now write another remarkable line. I attended my own

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burial. You resist when I write this. It seems to you altogether too remarkable or perhaps rather too comical. But we must tell it. It shall no longer remain a secret and soon the whole world will know and understand that the dead person attends his own funeral.

If you will use your imagination a little you will comprehend what a revolution this communication will effect, if it is believed. Of course it will not be accepted, but it will in part be received as you receive it. I have said that we shall conquer and we *shall* conquer. Soon you and the whole world will understand and see and feel that it is the truth from the beginning to the end. This is the new age, which now comes, and the old age will never return, for it has played its part, as it should. Everything has happened according to purpose. In the new age men shall know that they do not die, that when they follow their dead to the grave they know that it is only a body that they bury. He whom they knew and loved lives ever about them, far greater, far better, eternally happy, eternally, eternally, eternally, with God's smile over him.

GOD'S SMILE

My son, do you realize the scope of the message I bring you to-day? Do you now understand why a moment ago I described to you all the horrors by which you are now impressed, the abyss of misfortunes in which the people of Europe are sunk? Do you at the same time understand that this is really no misfortune? Do you understand that this was bound to come? Do you understand, far away in your heart, that the human spirit shall know all and that the spirit shall also know this? Do you understand that that period has passed away, when man was permitted to be the lord of the earth, without the capacity to comprehend and understand God's presence? You have lived in this period. If man had had the capacity to understand and comprehend God these misfortunes could never have occurred. But they have not endured long, only a second. For the spirit is eternal and the spirits that have suffered all the misery of the world have suffered only as human beings. But as spirit they are eternal and therefore they have not suffered at all.

My dear son, I cast only a faint glimmering light into your heart, in order that you may comprehend a small part of the mighty

GOD'S SMILE

message I bring to you, and in order that you may have an inkling of the incomprehensible and wonderful conception: Eternity and God.

Now I can continue. In a few lines I have touched upon a subject so comprehensive that your understanding cannot grasp it. But this reference is sufficient, for it will cast a light into your mind and you will dimly perceive the answer to the thousands of questions you will ask me, when I tell you to-day that I attended my own funeral.

We cannot straightway solve the riddle, for we are but human, but we can form a faint idea about it and be satisfied with that for the present. We must advance methodically and systematically. You are a child and I am your teacher. You shall learn to know life and death and eternity. You do not know how to spell yet. As you are, so, too, is the world. It cannot spell yet, but it shall learn. And you, who believed that you had attained to something, you, who talked about your centuries in contrast to the infancy of humanity and the history of other centuries, my dear fellow, you cannot spell yet.

GOD'S SMILE

Now the age has come, as it is determined, and you can blot out your history. You have lived in the kindergarten of humanity. Now for the first time you shall catch a glimpse of the heavenly light.

And now your old teacher goes away.

FATHER.

XV

MY DEAR BOY,

I told you in my last letter that I had attended my own funeral and that made a deep impression upon you, although it is quite natural and a logical consequence of everything that you have experienced and of everything that I have told you. Since it made so deep an impression upon you, I left you and let this impression conceal itself in your mind, where it rests now, germinates and grows. In the same manner I sow all my seeds in your thought and they will germinate and grow and you will understand. In like manner the world will understand. For thus we teach children life and wisdom.

I must continue and tell you that I knew what you thought while you buried your old father. I was in your mother's thought and smiled to her heart, and I patted your little sister's cheek. Never has the sun shone more mildly than on that May day when, with tears on your cheeks and choked with sobs, you bore

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the old man out to the churchyard and lowered the coffin in the ground. The birds sang in the yew-trees, the flowers exhaled fragrance from the graves, white clouds sailed gently through the blue sky. You came with the coffin from the dark chapel, where the melancholy organ had muttered. The organ had muttered and after you had sat with bowed heads and with the black bordered hymns in your hands, the doors were opened and you stepped out into the bright, beaming, twittering daylight.

I alone saw the daylight, my dear son. He, over whom you wept, smiled up to the sun. I, who gripped your dear throats with tears, I was with you and I was happy. I felt God's smile and a thousand tender notes trembled within me. A thousand lovely colors, the lovely singing of millions of birds, a thousand loving glances from loving eyes surrounded me. And you wept and bore me to my last resting place.

Do you now comprehend the radiant news I bring to you, my dear boy? *I* alone saw life, *I* alone saw the sun, *I* alone rejoiced and loved, loved, loved you. I could not weep and sympathize with you, for I was a spirit, I was

GOD'S SMILE

divine, and I knew that you were spirits and that you were divine and that you should all see God's smile. Sorrow and care are unknown here, for nothing sorrowful exists in the world except that which you believe to be sorrowful. After you have died you will know, as I do, that the sorrowful exists only in men's imagination, because they do not know God and shall not know Him, but shall be human beings so long as they draw life, which is God's gift to the spirit. You cannot understand this yet and you inquire again, but some time you will grow wiser.

My dear little vain son, I knew your heart that day when you buried your father. While I lived with you I knew it too, but I had never searched into it. I lived with you and shared your thoughts without realizing it, just as a person lives with one he loves, often without understanding or considering it. When I died and understood everything, I loved you more than ever before. I love you now more than words can tell, as we all love here. For the whole atmosphere and eternity are thrilled with love.

And I shall tell you that I knew your vain little heart. Did you not sit there in the

GOD'S SMILE

chapel and wonder how you would appear when, in a little while, you would take hold of the strap on your father's coffin and carry it out into the sunshine? Was not that a vain little thought that slunk into your mind? Later in your life you wondered how you could have acted so strangely in your grief. For you loved me above everything else in the world and you wept the bitterest and loveliest tears for your beloved, irritable little father. Is it not strange that I know this sly little secret, which you hide deep within your heart and dare not acknowledge even to yourself, because it fills you with shame, although you know that you have no reason to be ashamed of it?

I will tell you now that I knew your thought, for it was my own. I was in the sunbeam that fell on your tears through the window of the chapel, I was in the perfume that came from the roses on my coffin. I kissed your mother's heart. I warmed your little sister's soul and I placed myself in my dear boy's thought and conceived a blasphemous fancy and gave it to you. Even at that time I showed you in an unmistakable manner how an unknown voice can speak in your thought,

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and when I now tell you this little secret all your doubt vanishes. You understand so much. You perceive the purpose of it all. You see the logical sequence. You cannot explain to yourself why you see it, but some time you will understand it and you will teach other persons and yourself that there is not a secret concealed in the soul of man that is a secret.

My dear boy, you will now ask, and thousands will ask with you: "What happens when one dies? What feelings does one have? What does one see?"

I believe that more naïve spirits have given an explanation of this problem to more naïve human beings. Some say that one sees white, sunlit crosses, others say that one sleeps and is filled with longing, others say that one sees colors and mountains. You will understand me when I tell you that all this may be just as much right as it is wrong. Whatever men hear about death must always be man's invention, for men cannot understand the truth about these matters and they lack conceptions and words with which to describe them. If they insist on describing it, it becomes their own effort, the result of their own imagina-

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tion. For the spirit cannot explain anything that the human being cannot understand. It must, if it will speak, speak of a human conception. And they do not exist here.

We are poets, my dear son, and perhaps we can compose a little poetry about it. The truth, as it is, we cannot tell. We do not know it, for you have only eyes, heart, understanding and senses. Increase the number of your eyes by thousands, add to your senses millions of new senses that you do not know, and you might perhaps have a slight inkling of the remarkable, which is incomprehensible.

Let us compose a poem on truth, so that you will understand it. And let us speak the truth, so that it becomes a poem.

This is truth and it is a poem when I tell you that the soul leaves the body and is embraced by a thousand gentle hearts and is borne millions of miles out in the infinite space. This is fiction, but it is truth, when I say that the spirit rocks in the atmosphere in unutterable tenderness, in tender unutterableness, in tones and colors, in sun and perfume. Far, far it is borne and gently it is embraced and lovingly it is grasped by loving arms and

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hovers, glides, rocks, and sings away and sees God's smile in the sunset.

This is the poem about truth and the truth about the poem, when I tell you that the spirit is borne in tones and the perfume of flowers to the wondrous forest, where the leaves of the trees are the child's smile, where the flowers in the meadow are the deer's innocence, where the light in the air is the mother's tenderness, where the mold in the field is man's strength. There the spirit rocks in unutterable joy. The day is as the morning dew, the night is as the perfume of flowers, and the dawn and the sunset are God's smile.

Radiantly beautiful is the wonder tale that is truth and the truth that is a wonder tale. We shall tell this wonder tale to the sorrowing people of the world and we shall whisper this truth to those whose eyes are blinded with tears: "God smiles to the world."

FATHER.

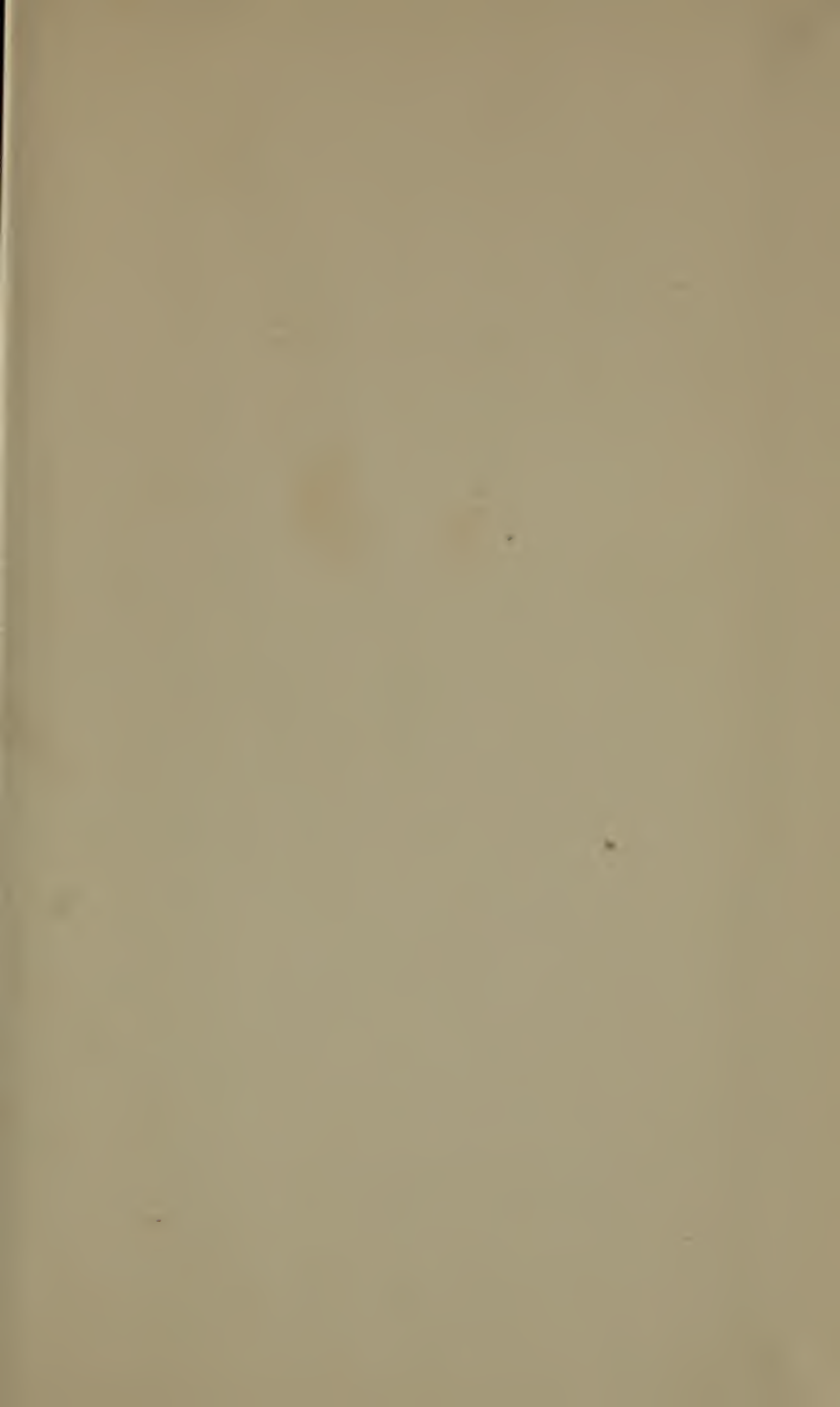
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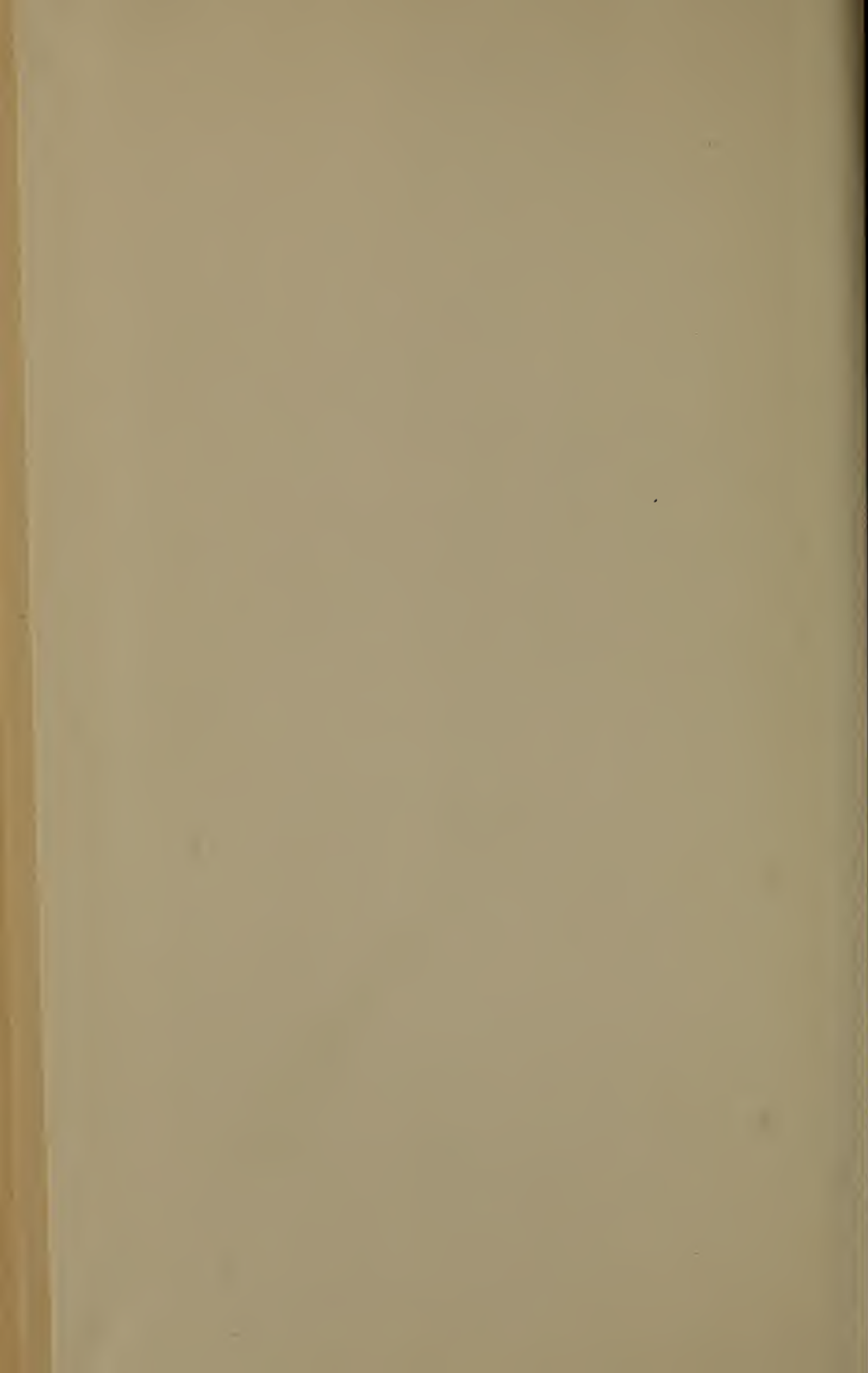
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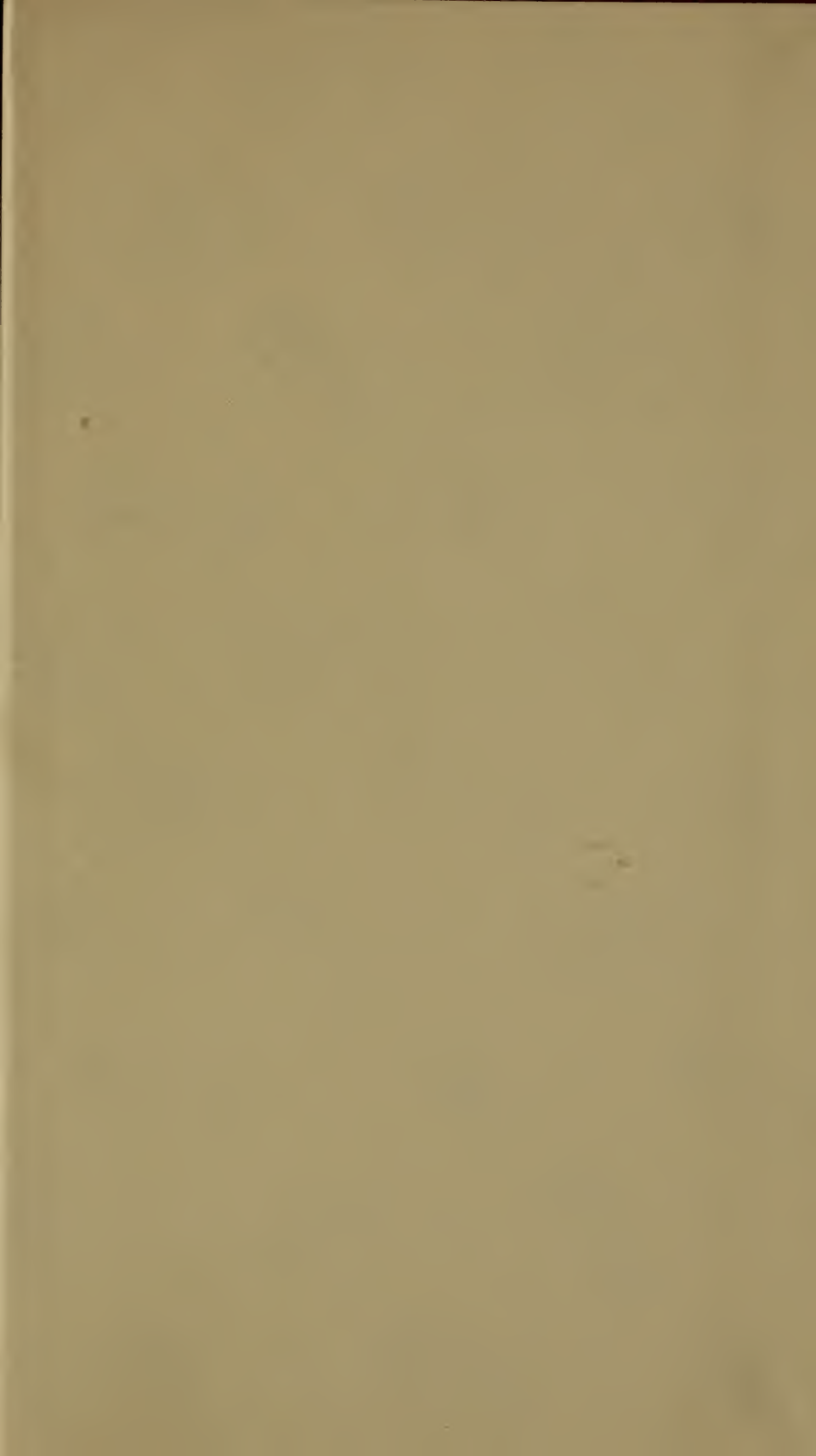
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